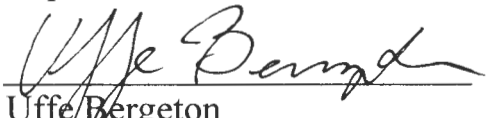
Spirits And The Ethic of *Zhen* 真: Analysis of Spirits in *The Story of Purple Hairpin* and *The Story of Handan*

Yihui Sheng

Senior Honors Thesis
Department of Asian Studies
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
2016

Approved:

Li-ling Hsiao
Department of Asian Studies



Uffe Bergeton
Department of Asian Studies

Contents

Abbreviations

HDJ	Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, *Handan ji* 邯鄲記 [*The Story of Handan*]. Ed. Xiao Li and Wenjing Jin. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe. 2004. Print.
SSJZS	*Shisan Jing Zhushu* 十三經注疏 [*Thirteen Classics with Commentaries*]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.
ZCJ	Tang Xianzu. *Zichai ji* 紫釵記 [*The Story of Purple Hairpin*]. Ed. Shiying Hu. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982. Print.

Abstract

This project focuses on the two plays *The Story of Purple Hairpin* (*Zichai Ji* 紫釵記, hence *Purple Hairpin*) and *The Story of Handan* (*Handan Ji* 邯鄲記, hence *Handan*) written by the Ming playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616 CE). For each play, the project takes respectively a Confucian and a Daoist perspective to investigate how *jiu,* the Chinese term for alcoholic beverages translated as spirits, manifests the ethic of *zhen* 真 [sincerity, authenticity, truth, and reality], which is the core ethic in the School of Mind ("*Xinxue*" 心學) and sometimes also demonstrated as *zhenqing* 真情 [sincere passion, authentic emotion, and true love]. In *Purple Hairpin*, the scenes of spirits illustrate how the ethic of *zhenqing* overcomes Confucian moral corruption and generates social harmony. In *Handan*, the scenes of spirits highlight the ethic of *zhen* as the key inspiration for a commoner to realize the illusion of human world and become a Daoist deity. The project concludes that from the ethic of *zhenqing* in *Purple Hairpin* to the ethic of *zhen* in *Handan*, Tang suggests a process of eliminating sexual implications in *zhenqing* and purifying *zhen* as the most cherished human ethic. In short, in both plays Tang highlights *zhen* as the key solution for the moral corruption in a Confucian society and in the entire human world.

Introduction

Spirits and Tang Xianzu's Plays

Jiu 酒, the general term for alcoholic beverages in Chinese and translated as spirits[1] in this project, is a small yet pervasive element in Chinese culture and history. Chinese people drink spirits, present them in ceremonies, and have created numerous masterpieces of literature, paintings, and music centering on spirits. Although it is difficult to date the exact origin, spirits have been widely consumed in the Shang (about 1600-1050 BCE) and Zhou (about 1046-256 BCE) dynasties and they remain popular in the modern society. As spirits developed almost together with Chinese civilization and are familiar to all the Chinese people, many of the literati, artists, and even governors use spirits to demonstrate their thoughts and concerns. Spirits have become a cultural symbol with philosophical indications beyond a common daily drink. This project explores the philosophical manifestation of spirits in the literary works of the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE). Specifically, it focuses on the two plays, *The Story of Purple Hairpin* (*Zichai Ji* 紫釵記, hence *Purple Hairpin*, finished in 1587 CE) and *The Story of Handan* (*Handan Ji* 邯鄲記, hence *Handan*, finished in 1601 CE) written by the great playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616 CE) to investigate how spirits manifest the ethic of *zhen* 真 [sincerity, authenticity, truth, and reality]. *Zhen* is the core moral concept in the Neo-Confucian school "The School of Mind" ("*Xinxue*" 心學) that thrived in the late Ming dynasty. *Zhen* sometimes is also demonstrated as the ethic of *zhenqing* 真情 [sincere passion, true love, authentic emotion] in literary works. Because Neo-Confucianism merges Daoist and Buddhist ideas to Confucianism, the concept of *zhen* in *Xinxue* can be examined through all the three

philosophical perspectives. As indicated in this project, spirits in *Purple Hairpin* and in *Handan* manifest the ethic of *zhen* from respectively a Confucian and a Daoist perspective. Spirits in the two plays illustrate how *zhen* overcomes the moral corruption in a Confucian society and even in the entire human world.

Exalting *zhen* as the central code of ethics, *Xinxue* has counter theories against "the School of Principle" (*Lixue* 理學). The two schools are derived from Neo-Confucianism that developed in the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE). *Xinxue* considers the ultimate truth "*Zhen*" exists inside human beings while *Lixue* attempts to find the great Dao "Principle" in the external world. Although *Lixue* was dominant in the Song and Ming periods, it very soon caused social hypocrisy and utilitarianism due to the overemphasis on external performances and the ignorance of innermost sincerity. Many Ming scholars observed and criticized such moral corruption. Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529 CE), the founder of *Xinxue*, asserted "the perfect conflation of knowing and acting 知行合一" as a solution.[2] According to Wang, there is no difference between a person's outer behaviors and inner thoughts. Once a person possesses certain thoughts with the ethic of *zhen* in his/her heart, s/he will never behave hypocritically. Wang's theory underlines the power of *zhen* to rectify the social abuse of formalities.

Later on, Wang's student Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602 CE) who is also a famous philosopher and writer further demonstrates the importance of *zhen* in his article "The Discussion On the Child-like Mind" ("Tongxin Shuo" 童心說). He explains,

> the child-like mind is the *zhen* mind...eliminating fakeness and purifies *zhen*, it is the original mind of the initial one thought.
>
> 夫童心者，真心也…… 絕假純真，最初一念之本心也。(Li, 91-92)

The *zhen* or the child-like mind indicates an original status with absolute sincerity and devoid of preset imposed conceptions. Such status is absolutely inward and personal. Because it does not rely on any exterior element, a child-like mind is able to maintain the pure truth. Li also believes a child-like mind is the key element for a great literary work. In the same article, Li contends,

> for the best articles under the heaven, none of them does not emerge from the child-like mind.
>
> 天下之至文，未有不出於童心焉者也。(Li, 91-92)

In order to write an affecting and influential article, a writer must possess the purest mind.

As a great playwright and also a follower of The School of Mind, Tang Xianzu not only had the child-like mind but also illustrates the ethic of *zhen* from different philosophical perspectives in *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan*. *Purple Haripin* depicts *zhen* through a romantic relationship and hence focuses on the ethic of *zhenqing.* The greatest power of *zhen* is carried by the female protagonist Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉 who has the deepest *qing* 情[love, passion, emotion]. Such power finally eliminates social hypocrisy in the play. In short, in *Purple Hairpin*, a human being's *qing* is used as the carrier of *zhen*. In comparison, centering on a male protagonist, *Handan* directly demonstrates the ethic of *zhen*. In the play, Tang suggests *zhen* as the only path that leads towards the ultimate truth and differentiates *zhen* from *qing*. While *qing* with its allusion to sexuality may lead to overindulgence in physical pleasure, *zhen* remains as the key quality that prevents one from being trapped in the illusory, corrupting world.

Spirits are commonplace in both *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan*. The beverages on the one hand solicit *zhen* in a character's mind. One the other hand, they also cause intoxication, corruption, and chaos. The main factor that determines the effect of drinking spirits is the

existence of *zhen*. Functioning as a double-edged sword, spirits illustrate highlight dramatic conflicts, social corruption as well as worldly illusion, and manifest the ethic of *zhen*.

The analysis of spirits' metaphysical representations in Tang's plays highlights the characteristics of Chinese food culture. Specifically, spirits, like Chinese food, are an embodiment of Chinese philosophy, religion, and society. In his introduction to *Food in Chinese Culture*, K.C. Chang states that, "perhaps the most important aspect of the Chinese food culture is the importance of food itself in Chinese culture" (11). David R. Knechtges argues in *A Literary Feast: Food In Early Chinese Literature* that, "One of the most pervasive uses of food in ancient Chinese literature is as metaphor in political or philosophical discourse" (51). Generally, Chang and Knechtges treat Chinese food not only as an important part of Chinese culture but also as a link to other elements in the culture. This project narrows down Chang and Knechtges's arguments from the culture of food to the culture of spirits and mainly focuses on *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan* to investigate the cultural significances embodied in the beverages. The research appears to be quite specific, but investigating the association between spirits and *zhen* exemplifies an important philosophical manifestation of spirits in the late Ming period.

Literature review

The contemporary studies on Chinese spirits mainly focus on historical and technical analyses but fail to discuss the beverages in literary and cultural contexts. Written by the research fellow Saishi Wang at the Graduate Institution of History of the Shandong Academy of Social Science, the book *The History of Chinese Spirits* (*Zhongguo jiushi* 中國酒史) is one of the most comprehensive scholarly works investigating the history of Chinese spirits. It delineates the development of spirits from as early as the earliest Three Dynasties (*sandai*, about 2070-256

BCE) to the Ming-Qing periods (1368-1912 CE). Examining technical progressions, social customs, and governments' policies, the book offers an encyclopedic survey on the production and consumption of spirits in Chinese history. The primary resources used in the book cover from Confucian canons like *The Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) and *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) to poems and articles written by great literary figures like Ji Kang 嵇康 (224-263 CE), Li Po 李白 (701-762 CE), and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101 CE), and extends to ancient scientific books like *Essential Techniques For The Welfare of The People* (*Qimin Yaoshu* 齊民要術). The author painstakingly navigates the great quantity of documents and extracts every possible clue to compile them into systematic statements.

However, despite the great quantity of primary resources, the book does not analyze the materials in detail. Wang treats all of the passages as collected information on spirits rather than as great works left by the most influential scholars, poets, and scientists. When he attempts to investigate the cultural meanings and importance of spirits, the author provides only basic explanations totaling a few sentences. He categorizes the descriptions into several groups without any further exploration into the core idea. In the first section discussing spirits in the Three Dynasties, especially the Zhou dynasty (1123-256 BCE), Wang relies heavily on *The Book of Poetry* to depict the image of Zhou people drinking. Even though he notes that spirits in the Zhou are closely related to agricultural activities, sacrificial religions, and social rituals, he merely presents the poems of spirits as historical facts without examining the deep meaning of spirits' popularity. However, as the first chapter of this thesis will demonstrate, all those social activities related to spirits in the Zhou manifest Confucian concepts like harmony and ritual.

Although the cultural importance of spirits is under-researched in Wang's book, he still highlights the beverages as a pervasive element in Chinese literature. In the chapter discussing

spirits in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the last section "The Summary of Theories Of Drinking Activity" (351-358) lists numerous famous scholars who wrote books and articles about spirits, including Zhu Youdun 朱有燉 (1379-1439 CE), Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523 CE), Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639 CE),Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610 CE), Gao Lian 高濂 (about 1573-1620 CE) and Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680 CE). Despite the lack of detailed analyses, Wang points out that, "in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the number of books and articles about spirits had increased greatly. People were interested in discussing topics related to spirits and accessing the deep meanings of spirits culture" (351).

Notably, most of the figures named above were famous playwrights in the Ming and Qing dynasties. They often depicted scenes involving spirits in their plays. As a popular literary genre written by many well-educated scholars in the late imperial era of China, drama illustrated these playwrights' concerns about contemporary social issues and even their thoughts about the entire Chinese tradition. Drama and spirits shared many similarities in the Ming and Qing dynasties when spirits were always served during theatrical performances. Spirits and drama were popular among all social hierarchies, and both provided passage across the border between illusion and reality. It is thus not surprising that drinking spirits is a frequent topic in Ming drama.

Many scholars investigate *zhenqing* 真情 in Tang Xianzu's plays but none of them notes the representations of spirits. For example, in her article "Languages of Love and Parameters of Culture in *Peony Pavilion* and *The Story of the Stone*," Wai-yee Li at Harvard investigates "the presumed high and low languages of *qing*" (239) in Tang's most celebrating play *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan Ting* 牡丹亭). Li argues that "the assimilation or appropriation of a vulgar, low diction into varied fabric made up of sentimental, romantic, philosophical rhetoric becomes a mark of *zhenqing*" (249). This project will take what Li describes as "the low and high languages" as the

physical and metaphysical divides of *zhenqing* and examine how spirits in *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan* present parallels and contrasts between the two divides. While Li believes that *zhenqing* is composed of both the low and high languages, this project aims to reveal the possible corruption of the physical divide and the ultimate truth represented by the metaphysical divide.

In her book *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* Li analyzes the problem of *qing* in *Handan*. According to Li, "*The Story of [Handan]* represents not so much a solution to the problem of [*qing*] as a playful and ironic questioning of the various solutions" (77). Because "the world of the [Daoist] immortals (in Handan) is not truly transcendent" (71), it does not suggest the ultimate truth but serves as a reflection and a parallel of the illusive human world. However, Li apparently understates the fundamental differences between the realms of human and of immortals. This project's analysis of drinking spirits in *Handan* presents those differences. It advocates that the immortals' non-transcendence does not contradict but essentially suggests *zhen* as the key ethic for achieving ultimate truth and dispelling the potential corruption caused by *qing*.

In short, both Chinese spirits culture and the manifestation of spirits in Tang's plays are under-researched. This project thus provides a novel perspective for understanding Tang's concerns and thoughts conveyed in his plays, and also suggests a different approach for investigating spirits culture in specific.

Chapter summary

The first chapter traces spirits in the first Chinese literature, *The Book of Poetry*, and takes a perspective of Neo-Confucianism to analyze how spirits manifest Confucian concepts of harmony (*he* 和), ritual, and respect (*jing* 敬). Confucian harmony suggests a public milieu in

which all the participants respect one another and practice ritual performances. Achieving such harmony requires people to practice and balance three core elements of Confucian ritual – respect, sincerity (*cheng* 誠) and self-control. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200 CE), one of the founders of *Lixue*, considers sincerity (*cheng* 誠) and respect as two mutually dependent moral codes. A person has to be sincere to hold his/her respect to others. The two ethics indicates a scholar's attitude when interacting with others and the emphasis on self-control regulates his behaviors. A scholar balances the three elements can harmonize with the outside world. The poems about drinking spirits in banquets in *The Book of Poetry* exemplify both situations in which the three elements of ritual are balanced and violated. While a non-ritualistic banquet results in chaos and disasters, an ideal Confucian banquet has all the participants achieving harmony by conducting rituals.

The discussion on Confucian harmony based on ritual, sincerity, and respect paves the way for the analysis of *zhen*. Although Zhu Xi still underlined sincerity and respect, these two ethics in *Lixue* require at least two people to practice. The ethics fail to highlight the most personal and intrinsic quality of a human individual and thus can be easily destroyed by hypocrisy and utilitarianism. As stated before, the formalities of Confucian rituals were overemphasized in the Ming dynasty. Confucian ritual became nothing but a tool for people to utilize and deceive one another. The lack of sincerity was one of the main reasons for the corruptions in the Ming society. To solve the problem, Tang suggests *zhen* as the solution.

The second chapter investigates spirits as a manifestation of *zhenqing* in *Purple Hairpin*. The play is depicted in a Confucian context, suggesting a Confucian perspective to examine the ethic of *zhenqing*. Spirits in the play indicate the abuse of Confucian rituals and also illustrate the great power of *zhenqing*. *Zhenqing* in *Purple Hairpin* initially focuses on the romantic, sincere

love between the lovers Li Yi 李益 and Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉. But later on the sexual implications in *zhenqing* diminish, and the quality of *zhen* evolves to be the dominant, influential power that elevates *zhenqing* to be the social ethic generating Confucian harmony. The spirits in the play help to introduce *zhenqing* to the Confucian world. The merge of *zhenqing* and Confucian rituals allows the characters to achieve the great harmony similar to what is depicted in *The Book of Poetry*.

The third chapter examines how spirits manifest *zhen* in *Handan*. *Handan* demonstrates *zhen* mainly in a Daoist context. Daoism is the counter philosophy of ancient Confucianism, but Neo-Confucianism merges Daoist ideas into Confucian concepts. Hence, as a scholar of *Xinxue*, Tang in *Handan* suggests a Daoist investigation of *zhen*. The play clarifies the metaphysical and physical divides of *zhenqing*. The physical divide is the sexuality that has the potential to cause social collapse, and the metaphysical divide is the absolute sincerity, i.e. *zhen*, that enables one to achieve Daoist immortality. Spirits again are presented in both divides and establish the contrasts between the two. The beverages also contribute to inspire people to retrieve the original status of *zhen* in their hearts.

The project concludes that the analysis of spirits in *Purple Hairpin* to *Handan* reveals the purification of *zhen*. Specifically, *zhen* in *Purple Hairpin* has to be demonstrated through *qing*, but in Handan, Tang describes *zhen* on its own. Furthermore, the four plays left by Tang, chronologically *Purple Hairpin* (finished in 1587 CE) and *Peony Pavilion* (1598), *The Story of Southern Bough* (*Nanke Ji* 南柯記, 1600) and *Handan* (1601)[3] together also indicate a process of purifying *zhen*, because the first two plays focus on *zhenqing* but the last two underlines *zhen*.

Chapter One

Confucian Harmony in Spirits as Manifested in *The Book of Poetry*

Spirits hold a long tradition as a manifestation of philosophical ethics. *The Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經, hence *Poetry*) is the earliest anthology of Chinese poetry including folklores and sacrificial songs. *Poetry* later is considered by Confucian scholars as one of the most important classics in Confucianism. Numerous scholars in Chinese history like the Han Confucian master Zhen Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE) and the Neo-Confucian master Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200 CE) associate the poems in *Poetry* with Confucian concepts. This chapter will take that academic tradition and investigate the associate between the spirits poems in *Poetry* and the Confucian concept of harmony *he* 和. Specifically, this chapter investigates how spirits' production as well as development and the social roles manifest Confucian harmony.

Confucian harmony has been highlighted as the greatest achievement of a Confucian society since the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-8 CE, 25-220CE). The harmony refers to a dynamic balance achieved through differences and tensions, a result more beneficial than the mere addition of its components.[4] Achieving such harmony does not require everything to be the same. Instead, differences are encouraged, and people like cultivated men (*junzi* 君子) are responsible for balancing them. The cultivated men have to be sincere (*cheng* 誠) and respectful (*jing* 敬) to one another, and they need to behave properly to externalize their ethics of sincerity and respect. In so doing, the cultivate men can avoid conflicts but open-mindedly accept differences, achieving the ideal equilibrium that benefits the entire group. In order to explain the idea of harmony, many Confucian scholars cite orchestras. Musicians gather together and play various

instruments; different sounds melodiously merge, producing more pleasant music than a single instrument. However, few have noticed how spirits exemplify harmony, even though the beverages have existed for thousands of years and are required in many Confucian ritual ceremonies. *Poetry* contains sixty out of three-hundred-and-five poems that mention spirits and drunkenness. In most of these works, ancient Chinese people use spirits to accompany feasts, celebrate great harvests, pay respect towards people, ancestors, and Heaven, and express their wish to continue happiness. All these activities illustrate harmony generated by spirits, and also highlight the participants' ethics of sincerity and respect.

Spirits as a symbol of Confucian harmony: incompatible elements achieving equilibrium under human effort

Because harmony exists in differences and tensions, achieving harmony requires cooperation and competition for which human force is essential. In *the Confucian Philosophy of Harmony*, Chenyang Li uses colors and plants to demonstrate harmony through cooperation and competition:

> The color red and the color green are different. They themselves are not in tension or conflict, though they may not be in harmony either…[the two colors] can be harmonized, however, when they are, along with other colors, incorporated into a beautiful painting.

Li continues to state,

> in the practice of intercropping farming, for instance, different crops like corn and soybean planted in alternate rows compete for sunlight, water, and soil. Competition implies tension. Harmony is achieved, however, when they strike an

equilibrium (neither overtaking nor destroying the other) and when they even benefit each other. (12)

Clearly, both painting and intercropping farming techniques demand individuals to participate. In *the Analects*, Confucius mentions,

A cultivated man seeks harmony, but not conformity." (trans. Leys, 64)

君子和而不同。(*SSJZS*, 179)

Cultivated men are devoted to finding an equilibrium that induces differences and tensions to achieve beneficial results. Such equilibrium stimulates development of civilization.

Making rice spirits involves fermenting grains and water into alcohol, which exemplifies Confucian harmony achieved under human effort. Grains and water are ordinarily incompatible, hardly fermenting in nature. However, ancient people successfully mixed them by exploring and applying the natural fermentation process of producing fruit spirits and milk spirits. Fermented into a liquid, grains and water, as mutual complements, have their characteristics balanced and advanced. Spirits share a similar form as water; it is endowed with nutrition and colors by grains. Moreover, spirits possess new, distinct features such as its unique taste, fragrant odor, and pleasant stimulation to human emotion. In *Peotry*, a poet describes spirits as "harmonious and delicious" ("hezhi" 和旨).[5] The character *he* indicates spirits as a representation of harmony.

Spirits' development further highlights human effort perfecting harmony. Initially, rice spirits resembled a cloudy mixture of water and grains rather than a pure liquid. In the Shang dynasty (1766-1045 BCE), people had started to make *li* 醴, an opaque and sweet spirits, an improvement from what was merely a mixture. Later in the Zhou dynasty (1045-256 BCE), clear spirits (*qingjiu* 清酒) became popular; it was tastier and more purified than *li*. Ancient people spent a long time seeking out the proper proportion of water, grain, and crop-made leaven; they

not only harmonize grains and water but also achieve an equilibrium that maximizes "harmonious and delicious" as spirits' distinct feature.

The similarity between spirits and another kind of food *hegeng* 和羹 in which *he* means harmonious and *geng* is a soup-like dish also demonstrates spirits as a metaphor for Confucian harmony. *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuo Zhuan* 左傳) records Yan Ying's 晏嬰 (? – 500 BCE) discussion about *hegeng*:

> *He* is like making soup (*geng*). One needs water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plums in order to cook fish and meat. One needs to cook them with firewood. The cook needs to mingle (*he*) ingredients together in order to balance the taste. He needs to compensate for deficiencies and to reduce excessiveness. In eating [this balanced food], the good person (*junzi*) achieves a balanced heart-mind. (trans. Legge, 684)
>
> 和如羹焉。水火醯醢鹽梅，以烹魚肉，燀之以薪，宰夫和之，齊之以味，濟其不及，以洩其過，君子食之，以平其心。(*SSJZS* 1400-1401)

According to Yan, as a representation of harmony, *hegeng* tastes balanced, because it resolves the tensions among all the raw materials. Water and fire are competitive; so are the flavors. Fire may overpower water, making *geng* into a mashed dish. Condiments' flavors may damage the taste of meats, wasting the valuable foodstuff. To produce delicious *geng*, the cook has to harmonize all the components.

Spirits have a similar production process as *hegeng*. Recorded in the chapter "Governing in the Different Months" ("Yueling" 月令) in *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記),

> Orders are given to the Grand superintendent of the preparation of liquors to see that the rice and other glutinous grains are all complete; that the leaven-cakes are

in season; that the soaking and heating are cleanly conducted; that the water be fragrant; that the vessels of pottery be good; and that the regulation of the fire be right. These six things have all to be attended to, and the Grand superintendent has the inspection of them, to secure that there be no error or mistake. (trans. Legge, 303)

乃命大酋，秫稻必齊，麴蘗必時，湛熾必潔，水泉必香，陶器必良，火齊必得，兼用六物。大酋監之，毋有差貸。(*SSJZS* 554)

To make spirits, rice is first cooked when fire and water are balanced. Then the rice, a clean container, and leaven, usually moldy crops are used together to start fermentation. The amounts of leaven and rice have to be balanced because too much leaven would sour the taste. During fermentation, temperature must be controlled to prevent any damage to spirits' quality. Only when leaven, grain, water, and fire achieve equilibrium can the tasty spirits be produced. In this process, the Grand Superintendent performs similarly to the cook of *hegeng* by harmonizing the originally incompatible materials into a new, desirable form.

In *Poetry*, the poem *Great Ancestors* (*Liezu* 烈祖) suggests a connection between *hegeng* and spirits. Part of the poem states:

Here are the clear spirits,

Ancestors, please come and bless us with *cheng* [great achievement].

Here too is the *hegeng*,

Its taste is balanced;

Our praying is silent, without a word,

At this moment, there is no contention or argument.

既載清酤，

賚我思成。

亦有和羹，

既戒既平。

鬷假無言，

時靡有爭。(*SSJZS* 1437)

With similar sentence structure, the first two lines pair with the following two, suggesting spirits and *hegeng*'s related ritual functions. The late Qing scholar Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842-1917 c.e.) records in *The Collections of Three Schools' Annotations of* Poetry (*Shi sanjia yiji shu* 詩三家義集疏):

> Chen Huan 陳奐 (1786-1863 CE) said "[the structures of] here is and here too is are in parallel. It means here are spirits and here too is *hegeng*.'"
>
> 陳奐云：「『亦有』與『既載』對文，言既載清酤，亦有和羹也。」(1101)

Also, in *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始, the scholar Fang Yurun 方玉潤 (1811-1883 CE) argues,

> the poem *Liezu* mentions clear spirits and *hegeng* simultaneously, is it not a chapter describing [a ritual named] *wuxian* of presenting food and drink [to ancestors]?"
>
> 此詩兼言清酤和羹，其五獻薦熟之章歟？(646)

Performing *wuxian* 五獻 refers to people presenting pure spirits and *hegeng* to their ancestors in sacrifices. In doing so, the living wish the ancestors to enjoy the food and bring them happiness. As a ceremonial complement of *hegeng*, spirits, embodying harmony, share a similar characteristic of a balanced *hegeng*.

Confucian harmony and spirits rituals: equilibrium between ethics and behaviors

As one of the most important Confucian concepts, ritual balances one's outer performances and his/her inner qualities like ethics as well as feelings. Ritual externalizes one's respect and sincerity and regulates how people should perform. Performing Confucian ritual elucidates social hierarchies yet also emphasizes harmony among individuals. The beginning of the first chapter in *The Book of Ritual* (*Liji* 禮記) underscores respect, sincerity, and self-regulation as the three key elements of ritual,

> The Summary of the rules of [Li] says: ―Always and in everything let there be reverence; with the deportment grave as when one is thinking (deeply), and with speech composed and definite. This will make the people tranquil. (trans. Legge 62)
>
> 曲禮曰：「毋不敬，儼若思，安定辭。安民哉！」(*SSJZS* 6-7)

"Always and in everything let there be reverence" clarifies that "reverence/respect" is the foundation of ritual. "The deportment grave as when one is thinking (deeply)," in Jia Gongyan's 賈公彥 (?-?) annotation, refers to "solemnize the heart" (*suxin* 肅心) (7), which means to purify one's mind and pursue the proper Dao (*zhengdao* 正道). The phrase emphasizes sincerity as well as concentration as an inner practice of ritual. "Speech composed and definite" means to be careful with one's words, suggesting self-regulation to adjust behaviors. With respect, sincerity, and self-regulation, one would be able to "make the people tranquil," which means to harmonize one's people and nation. Ideal ritual is a result of the equilibrium among the three elements. Conducting ritualistic behaviors or ceremonies, a person needs to be respectful and balance the inner and outer practices of ritual in order to cultivate and enjoy the harmonious, beneficial aftermath.

As part of general rituals, spirits rituals exhibiting all the three elements stated above. For example, the ritual of presenting spirits illustrates filial piety, an essential Confucian moral code, and visualizes presenters' sincerity and respect to receivers. The ritual also clarifies and harmonizes complicated familial and social hierarchies. Meanwhile, as people sometimes insatiably crave to drink, resulting in overdrinking and intoxication, spirits rituals regulate and guide individuals to achieve equilibrium that prevents their inner feelings as well as desires from causing chaos.

Presenting spirits is a gesture of sincerity and respect. Because spirits production required a considerable labor force and a bountiful harvest, spirits were scarce in ancient agricultural society due to limited population and under-developed agricultural techniques. Scarcity of spirits with the high demand results in ancient cultures' valuing the beverage considerably more than those in post-modern times. Therefore, one presenting such valuable beverages to the other conveys a presenter's sincere respect to that person. Such sincerity and respect are noticeable during and shortly after wartime when food and labor are extremely insufficient. The chapter titled "The Announcement about Drunkenness" ("*Jiu Gao*" 酒誥) in *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) records that due to years of wars and the experience learnt from Emperor Zhou of Yin, Duke Zhou decided to prohibit drinking among people primarily to save food. However, he persisted in using spirits in sacrifices and filial activities, underlining the importance to maintain people's sincerity and respect to Heaven, Earth, ancestors, and parents. Duke Zhou cited the Zhou dynasty's ancestor King Wen's statement,

> "For sacrifices spirits should be employed. When heaven was sending down its *favoring* decree, and laying the foundation of *the eminence of* our people, *spirits* were used only at the great sacrifices." (trans. Legge, 399-401)

祀茲酒。惟天降命，肇我民，惟元祀。(*SSJZS* 373)

He continued to state,

> *Ye people of* the land of Mei, if you can employ your limbs, largely cultivating your millets, and hastening about in the service of your fathers and elders; and if, with your carts and oxen, you traffic to a distance, that you may thereby filially minister to your parents; - then, when your parents are happy, you may set forth your spirits clear and strong, and use them." (trans. Legge, 404)
>
> 妹土，嗣爾股肱，純其藝黍稷，奔走事厥考厥長。肇牽車牛，遠服賈用。孝養厥父母，厥父母慶，自洗腆，致用酒。(*SSJZS* 376)

In sacrifices, spirits help to connect people to the Heaven. Presenting the beverages conveys people's sincere respect to the great, unknown power so that the power will bless the presenters. In families, children perform filial piety by presenting parents spirits. The beverages externalize the children's sincerity and respect to the parents, advancing familial happiness. In short, Duke Zhou regulated spirit' social and ritual function and allowed spirits to be consumed only with the ethics of sincerity and respect.

The gesture of presenting spirits not only expresses the presenter's sincerity and respect towards the receiver but also clarifies different hierarchies. From the same passages cited above, Duke Zhou stressed that for parents or humans to drink spirits, crops and articles must be enough for daily use. In contrast, at the beginning of the announcement, he highlighted the spirits' importance in sacrifices without any prerequisite. Although Heaven, the deceased ancestors, and the living parents all deserve the offspring's respect, Duke Zhou ranked the former two much higher.

Duke Zhou built up such hierarchy based on filial piety that requires the offspring to respect their elders. According to this ethic, dead ancestors should be worshiped before the living offspring, and the living parents are prioritized over elder brothers. These rules complicate hierarchy of filial piety in some situations. In *Mencius*, Mencius, telling his student Gongdu 公都子 about how to answer Meng Ji's 孟季子 question, mentions an example of the flexible hierarchy that

> [you should ask him,] 'Which do you respect most, - your uncle, or your younger brother?' He will answer, 'My uncle.' Ask him again, 'If your younger brother be personating a dead ancestor, to which do you show the greater respect, - to him or to your uncle?' He will say, 'To my younger brother.' You can go on, 'But where is the respect due, as your said, to your uncle?' He will reply to this, 'I show the respect to my younger brother, because of the position which he occupies.' (trans. Legge, 400)
>
> 「『敬叔父乎？敬弟乎？』彼將曰：『敬叔父。』曰：『弟為尸，則誰敬？』彼將曰：『敬弟。』子曰：『惡在其敬叔父也？』彼將曰：『在位故也。』」

When a younger brother represents an ancestor in a sacrifice, he should be in the highest position regardless of his actual status. Flexibility therefore usually makes hierarchy complicated.

However, although a familial hierarchy might be confusing, ritual requires participants to consider priorities when presenting spirits. The person of the highest status should receive the first cup, and then people take turns to drink. Converting theoretical or ethical hierarchy into practical performances, spirits ritual clarifies and visualizes each member's position in a family.

Emphasizing a harmonious hierarchy, neither filial piety nor spirits ritual refers to absolute superiority of the upper status. In the chapter "Proper remonstration" ("Zhengjian" 正諫) of *Shuo Yuan* 說苑, Confucius states,

> If an emperor does not have a remonstrative minister, a father does not have a remonstrative son, an elder brother does not have a remonstrative younger brother, a husband does not have a remonstrative wife, or a man does not have a remonstrative friend, he will corrupt very soon.
> 君無諤諤之臣，父無諤諤之子，兄無諤諤之弟，夫無諤諤之婦，士無諤諤之友；其亡可立而待。(Liu, 266)

A son respects his father and also remonstrates him when the father is wrong. Meanwhile, as the familial filial piety can extend to community and government, emperor and feudatories also have a father-and-son-like relationship; the ethic thus requires the feudatories to be loyal to an emperor and the emperor to politely treat his feudatories. In such application, when spirits ritual is included in an official activity like a royal banquet, it further elucidates social hierarchy and shows a balance.

The poem "Red Bows" ("Tong'gong" 彤弓) in *Poetry* records a feast arranged by an emperor for his feudatories and reveals the equilibrium in that relationship. *Red Bows* has three paragraphs; each ends with a line about spirits ritual in the feast. The first paragraph depicts an emperor bestowing red bows to the feudatories who have conquered territories for the nation. Its last line is

> in this morning, I will feast with my noble guests.
> 一朝饗之。(*SSJZS* 626)

The emperor prepares a feast with spirits and food, highly regarding the feudatories' contribution. The second paragraph ends with

> in this morning [during the feast], I *you* [present spirits to] my guests."
>
> 一朝右之。(627)

You 右 mainly has two explanations. One refers to *youbi* 佑幣, meaning to award guests in a feast. The other one means to persuade guests to drink. Both explanations indicate a person in a higher position respecting people of lower status. The poem ends with

> in this morning, we *chou* [present spirits to] one another.
>
> 一朝酬之。(628)

One explanation of *chou* 酬 states that it means the emperor bestowing the feudatories some gifts to encourage them to drink. The other one suggests that *chou* means guests and hosts presenting spirits to one another. In both explanations, the spirits ritual envisions respect between the emperor and feudatories. The feast is in harmony, echoing what Confucius highlights in *the Analects* as

> a ruler should treat his minister with courtesy, a minister should serve his ruler with loyalty. (trans. Leys, 12)
>
> 君使臣以禮，臣事君以忠。(*SSJZS* 41)

Although the emperor is at the top of a hierarchy, he ritually treats the feudatories. In return, the feudatories modestly accept the emperor's bestowal and continue to serve the nation.

Apart from the rules on group drinking, spirits rituals also regulate individual's behavior. A person has to balance his/her desire of drinking and discipline his/her behavior to avoid any trouble caused by intoxication. Harmonious drunkenness is an ideal of drinking that guarantees

endless good fortune; it brings people pleasant, emotional stimulation, and also maintains a ritualistic milieu.

"Guests At The Beginning of A Feast" ("Bin zhi chuyan" 賓之初筵, hence "Guests"), one of the most important spirits poems in *Poetry*, describes a feast accompanying an archery competition in the first two paragraphs. All the guests behave properly and enjoy drinking without getting intoxicated; they also ritually worship their ancestors, being blessed with continuous happiness. In these two paragraphs, the should-be hostility in the rivaled competition is supplanted by the happiness and harmony of the feast.

However, in the third and fourth paragraphs, as the feast continues, the guests indulge in spirits and disregard all the disciplines. They start to dance drunkenly, behaving like foolish clowns. Spirits no longer bring ancestors' blessing but causes huge chaos. Nonetheless, despite the opposite effects, spirits maintain as the alcoholic beverages with stimulating effects. It is the guests who violate ritual regulations and lose control on their desires, leading to the disarray of the feast. Stated in the fourth paragraph, spirits rituals require people "[to] leave when having been drunk 既醉而出" (*SSJZS* 891) so that good fortune would be blessed, and "[guests who are] drunk but not leaving damage [their] morality 醉而不出，是謂伐德" (891). People with a sense of morality should be capable of and responsible for controlling their desires for spirits. The last two lines of the fourth paragraph—"it is delightful to drink spirits; but ones must keep dignified behaviors 飲酒孔嘉，惟其令儀" (891) —directly demand drinkers to be conscious of rituals.

The last paragraph of "Guests" reemphasizes spirits ritual that regulates all the guests' behaviors. A sentence says

with three cups [one has] lost head;

how can [others] continue to encourage [him] to drink more;

三爵不識

矧敢多又。(892)

The poet reminds not only drinkers but also spirits presenters of ritual disciplines. In the feast, every one should avoid over drinking or encouraging others to over drink; only through that could harmonious drunkenness be achieved.

Criticizing the chaos caused by intoxication, the poet of "Guests" underlines ritual as a way to regulate people's uncontrollable desire. Rather than an image of harmonious drunkenness, the poet shows two ends of the equilibrium – on the one hand chaos under intoxication, and on the other ritual behaviors without drunkenness. In comparison, another poem "There Are Horses" ("Youbi" 有駜, hence "Horses") displays straightforwardly that balance.

"Horses" contains three paragraphs; each depicts a scene of harmonious drunkenness in a feast and reveals the accompanying limitless good fortune. The first paragraph ends with

The drums resound; [guests] get drunk and dance;

[they are] all in happiness.

鼓咽咽，醉言舞。

于胥樂兮。(1393)

In "Guests," the poet criticizes that the dancing after intoxication leads to the improper physical displays,

when [their] crowns are leaning on one side,

[they] keep dancing drunkenly.

側弁之俄，

屢舞僊僊。(891)

However, in “Horses,” dancing after drunkenness expresses and stimulates happiness. The major difference between the two is the drums’ rhythm, a representation of regulations. In “Guests,” the dancing is not regulated by rhythm; intoxicated people simply move their bodies rudely and hyperbolically. Nevertheless in “Horses,” “the drums resound” indicates that the drunken people dance within the bound of rhythms. The guests in “Horses” are less intoxicated and more aware of ritual than those in “Guests.” Being simultaneously drunk enough for joy and sober enough to continue adhering to the ritual illustrate the ideal harmony of drunkenness.

The second paragraph of “Horses” ends with:

The drums resound; [guests are] drunk and going back.

[They are] all in happiness.

鼓咽咽，醉言歸。

于胥樂兮。(1394)

Going back after drunkenness echoes what “Guests” praises as “[to] leave when having been drunk.” Compared to the previous “drunk and dance,” “drunk and going back” describes people getting more intoxicated. Unlike those who “are drunk but not leaving” in “Guests,” the guests in “Horses” stop drinking and go home to avoid making trouble. The drum again refers to the order and ritual of the people leaving in a joyous and festive mood. All the guests achieve harmonious drunkenness through balancing the ritual and desire of drinking. The whole poem ends with

The cultivated man has great kindness, which is passed to his grandsons;

[they are] all in happiness,

君子有穀，詒孫子。

于胥樂兮。(1395)

The sentences reflect the endless fortune brought by the harmony.

Harmonious drunkenness means being stimulated by spirits while following the respective rituals and disciplines. In *the Analects*, Confucius mentions

> As regards to spirits, however, there are no restrictions, as long as he retains a clear head. (trans. Leys, 46)
>
> 惟酒無量，不及亂。(*SSJZS*, 135)

There is no strict standard for how much spirits each person should consume. The only requirement is that when drinking individuals should never cross the critical point of completely losing control. This critical point exemplifies the ultimate goal of Confucian ritual, which is to achieve the dynamic equilibrium that, based on respect, balances the inner emotions as well as desires and outer behaviors of human beings. Such equilibrium enables both the inner and outer parts to mutually cultivate and develop, gradually making progress towards a higher achievement.

Conclusion: the ethics of sincerity, respect, and *zhen*

Functioning like a double-edged sword and having positive and negative effects, spirits underline the ethics of sincerity and respect, the two essential ethics of Confucian ritual. All the four spirits poems analyzed in the chapter describe a ritualistic group event, either a feast or a sacrifice. In a group activity, spirits rituals provide the general stratagem that has to be followed along the time, and respect and sincerity are the specific moral codes that regulate each individual's attitude and behaviors toward the others. While ritual is the appropriate expression of one's respect, respect suggests a proper way to regulate and externalize one's sincerity. Sincerity is the quality ensuring that the respect conveyed is reliable, and the ethics of sincerity and respect enable the ritual to head towards ultimate harmony. Because respect and sincerity suggest intense inner feelings and desires, the two inner qualities make a ritual performance

trustful but meanwhile they also need to be regulated so that they will not become overwhelming and even problematic. It is worth noting that spirits, due to its stimulating nature, can naturally nurture the inner qualities while for the same reason, the beverages may also over-cultivate the inner power, bringing chaotic results. The dual functions of spirits make the beverages an ideal object to exemplify concepts like sincerity and respect that require control, balance, and harmony.

However, the concepts of sincerity, respect and ritual all in different degrees rely on exterior conditions. The concepts need at least two people to demonstrate and practice. Rituals are the rules on group activities, and sincerity as well as respect moralize one's attitude towards the others. Although Confucian harmony suggests a balance between human inner qualities and outer conducts, the concept fails to clarify and underline the most intrinsic nature of human beings, a unique human feature that is absolute personal and generates sincerity and respect. Even worse, because the innermost human quality is understated even in an important, long-existed Confucian idea like harmony, this quality can be easily ignored along the time. The absence of the innermost quality discredits the reliability of sincerity and respect. As a result, Confucian rituals become nothing but hypocritical performances abused for utilitarian purposes.

The disastrous outcome of ignoring the innermost quality achieved its climax in the Ming dynasty. The Song scholar Zhu Xi in *lixue* [The School of Principle] was extremely influential in the Ming. Zhu advocates the ethics of respect and sincerity in his works and claims that people should seek and achieve the ultimate *Principle* by fully examining and understanding the outside world. Because Zhu and his dominant theories overemphasize the outward interaction and understate the inward motivation, the Ming society under his influence gradually corrupted to a status rife with hypocrisy and utilitarianism.

Criticizing the moral corruption in the Ming dynasty, scholars in *Xinxue* [The School of Mind] like Tang Xianzu clarified and underlined *zhen* [sincerity, authenticity, truth] as the innermost quality for an individual human to not only overcome social hypocrisy but also obtain the absolute truth that breaks all the worldly illusions. Unlike sincerity, respect, or ritual, *zhen* never relies on interactions with the outside. *Zhen* is the most intrinsic, personal quality of a human being. In his two plays *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan*, Tang highlights the innermost human quality of *zhen* from a Confucian and a Daoist perspective. The two plays disapprove the overemphasis on exterior objects and conducts in *lixue*.

Spirits are pervasively presented in *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan*. First, the plays continue the literary tradition started in *Poetry* of using the alcoholic beverages to express authors' intensions and thoughts. In almost every literary genre developed after *Poetry*, spirits are one of the major motifs. For example, "The Summons To The Soul 招魂" in *The Song of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭), the great Tang poet Li Po's 李白 (701-762 CE) "Bring In The Spirits 將進酒," and the well known female lyrics writer Li Qingzhao's 李清照 (1084-1151 CE) "The Tune Of Like A Dream 如夢令" are the most representative literary masterpieces on spirits. Spirits are used to depict different themes including ritualistic celebrations, admonitions to leaders or government, romantic imaginations, and philosophical discussions. Tang's *Purple Hairpin* and *Handan* continue the tradition of using spirits in the literary works. Spirits' dual functions make the beverages an ideal object to generate dramatic conflicts. Additionally, because drinking spirits is a shared activity for both lower and higher classes, the playwright uses the beverages to draw comparisons and contrasts among people in different social statuses.

Second, the two plays also use spirits' various functions to demonstrate the main theme of *zhen*. In Confucianism, spirits are important ritual objects but they may also cause disorder

and chaos. In Daoism, the beverages represent the magic drinks that enable Daoist practitioners to approach the ultimate truth of Dao, but spirits may also make people indulgent in illusory, material pleasures. As indicated in the two plays, *dramatis personae* are benefited from drinking spirits only when they attain *zhen* in their hearts. The dual functions of spirits in both Confucianism and Daoism exemplify how the ethic of *zhen* helps humans approach the highest achievements – the great Confucian harmony and the ultimate Dao in the two philosophical contexts.

Chapter Two

Ritual Object or Emotional Stimulus:

Analyses of Spirits in *The Story of the Purple Hairpin*

Adapted from the Tang dynasty era novella, *The Story of Huo Xiaoyu* (*Huo Xiaoyu zhuan* 霍小玉傳), *Purple Hairpin*, written by Tang Xianzu, is about the romance between a talented scholar Li Yi 李益 and Duke Huo's charming daughter Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉. But in this play, Tang has considerations beyond a simple love story. Specifically, he discloses the corruption of Confucian rituals and highlights *zhenqing* as the key element to build harmonious, reliable human connections. While Tang does not criticize Confucianism, he does suggest *zhenqing* [sincere passion, true love, authentic emotion] as an ethic to correct the overemphasis on and abuse of ritual formalities and objects. The play therefore can be interpreted as depicting two worlds - the corruption of Confucian society and the thriving realm of *zhenqing* harmonizing into one affecting, ritualistic domain. Consumed in both worlds, spirits demonstrate the contrast between the two and also stimulate the merging of them. The beverages are consumed either as an object in ceremonial rituals or as a stimulus of *zhenqing*. The former function is exploited in the Confucian society to fabricate familial, social and national relationships. It fails to resolve any differences or tensions. Spirits' latter function, which is exalted in the realm of *zhenqing*, is not restricted by ritualistic disciplines but provokes characters' union of minds and proceeds to relieve existing tensions. This latter function further empowers the characters in the realm of *zhenqing* to fight against the corrupting yet dominant power in the Confucian society. Such function advances *zhenqing* into Confucian society and retrieves the proper use of ritual. In short, the analysis of the scenes of drinking spirits indicates that as Confucian rituals become an abused

mechanical tool, *zhenqing* possesses the power to rectify the abused rituals, dispel all tensions, and generate harmony. The beverages help to harmonize the society of ritual and the realm of *zhenqing* into one ideal world.

Before the discussion of spirits, the story of *Purple Hairpin* is summarized here. Huo Xiaoyu and Li Yi fall in love with one another while attending the Lantern Festival in Chang'an 長安. They use Huo's purple jade hairpin as a token of love, and are soon married under the guidance of the matchmaker Bao Siniang 鮑四娘. A few days after their marriage, Li embarks on the journey to the capital to take the civil examination, and he earns first place. But when Li returns to Chang'an, he directly goes home and forgets to pay respect to the local powerful, malicious Military Minister Lu 盧太尉. As a punishment to Li, the minister assigns Li to the front fortress Yumen 玉門 and forces him to be separated from his wife. At Yumen, Li serves as a secretary of his old friend General Liu Gongji 劉公濟 for three years and accomplishes great feats. When General Liu is summoned to the capital, Li who should be able to return home by then is reassigned to Lu's army at Mengmen 孟門 under Lu's intrigue. Considering Li as a potentially useful political ally, Lu attempts to force Li to marry his daughter. He confines Li in his army and later his mansion when they return to Chang'an. Although Li never accepts Lu's proposal of the marriage, Lu attempts to break up Li and Huo's relationship by misleading Huo to believe that Li has abandoned her. Huo therefore suffers from a fatal lovesickness and almost dies. It is at that crucial moment that a heroic character Huangshan Ke 黃衫客 offers his help. Huangshan Ke saves Li and Huo from their tragedy and punishes the malicious minister Lu. The lovers finally reunite in Huo's mansion and receive the emperor's commendation. In the play, spirits are presented in almost all the important turning points of the plot developments. The

beverages provide a valuable perspective into the story and allow readers to comprehend better the playwright's intensions.

Spirits in the society of ritual

As indicated in the first chapter, the ritual of presenting spirits demonstrates the equilibrium between human ethics and behaviors. Encouraging the consumption of spirits as a ritual rather than mere entertainment prevents the chaos resulting from intoxication. Therefore, a ritualistic feast guarantees the harmony among the participants. In his book *Confucius: the Secular as Sacred*, Herbert Fingarette uses the term "magic" to refer to the function of ritual. He specifies that, "by 'magic' I mean the power of a specific person to accomplish his will directly and effortlessly through ritual, gesture, and incantation." (3) Confucian ritual provides the only way, and also the magical and most useful way for cultivated people *junzi* to harmonize their differences and tensions.

However, in *Purple Hairpin* Tang Xianzu questions the reliability and sustainability of such "harmony." He casts doubt on the effectiveness of rituals on generating harmony. Tang perceives that the ideal form of ritual, though cherished, has ceased. When the concept of ritual is simplified into mere formalities, or even further simplified into mere physical objects, it loses its "magic" and even hinders individuals from expressing their true thoughts. In the play, serving and drinking spirits constructs and maintains familial and social relationships, but the gesture fails to resolve differences or tensions existing in such relationships. Why? Because to abuse spirits and related rituals solely for utilitarian purposes, namely personal political gain, incites disaster for those involved. The overemphasis on ritual formalities, on physical objects, and on

utilitarianism undermines the function of spirits rituals. The harmony aroused in seemingly ritualistic banquets is temporary, superficial, and sometimes even disastrous.////

The play's first parody of spirits rituals is featured in Scene 13 "Wedding on the Birthday of Flowers" ("Huazhao Hejin" 花朝合巹). The scene depicts a "harmonious" ceremony with underlying deception. Specifically, coming to the wedding, Li, a homeless, penniless scholar, misleads Huo, Huo's mother, and all the guests to consider him as an upper-class person. In order to match the wealthy, aristocratic Huo family, Li asks his friends to borrow servants and horses for him. In the wedding, Li pretends all the borrowed servants and horses are his personal property. When his own, single page inadvertently blurts out the truth in front of Huo's mother, Li gets quite anxious. He immediately "rectifies" the page's words by misinterpreting them with an auspicious meaning to dispel the mother's suspicion. This small yet noticeable accident ridicules the auspicious wedding feast, which, as indicated by the scene's title "*Hejin*" 合巹, should otherwise generate harmony by enjoying spirits.

"*Hejin*" specifies a rite for a newly married couple to drink spirits from the same gourd. *The Book of Rites* states,

> They ate together of the same animal, and joined in sipping from the cups made of the same melon; thus showing that they now formed one body, were of equal rank, and pledged to mutual affection. (trans. Legge, 872)
>
> 共牢而食，合巹而酳，所以合體同尊卑以親之也. (*SSJZS* 1619)

According to Jia Gongyan's 賈公彥 (?-?) annotation,

> [the ritual] aims to let the husband feel affection for the wife, and also let the wife feel affection for the husband. In this way, [the ritual] make the husband and wife in one, so they have no hierarchical differences.

欲使壻之親婦，婦亦親壻，所以體同為一，不使尊卑有疏也. (2489)

Through the unique way of drinking, the male and female establish their relationship as husband and wife and become "oneness." In the scene, the playwright uses "*Hejin*" to refer to the entire wedding, underlining the supposed union between Huo and Li. Unfortunately, Li's hoax reveals an incompatible difference between his and Huo's social statuses, even though it is for sure that Li loves Huo. The wedding ritual fails to help the lovers solve their problem. Instead, it makes Huo a victim of the superficial and disguised harmony. It is then understandable that after they get married, Huo still worries about Li's loyalty to her.[6] The wedding ceremony does not guarantee the everlasting oneness of the lovers. Instead of unifying the two lovers with sincerity, it becomes a tedious process fraud with insincerity and deception.

Overstating the ritual formats and objects, the wedding and the feast reverse the interaction between humans and rituals in Confucianism. Cultivated men should participate in rituals to solve tensions and generate harmony. Fingarette in *Confucius: the Secular as Sacred* further suggests that, "we may even think of *li* as the map or the specific road-system which is [Dao]" (20). *Li*, the Confucian concept of ritual, guides people towards the highest achievement and the ultimate goal in Confucianism. Taking the right ways of *li*, cultivated men put their effort to "walk straight upon the [Dao]" (21). In short, Confucian ritual symbolizes human civilization. It requires individuals' active and diligent participations. Nonetheless in the wedding in *Purple Hairpin*, characters are compelled to practice various rites for a clichéd, formulaic outcome. Harmony, an expected result generated through human efforts, turns gradually into a mere prescribed ritual action. Without human efforts to solve existing problems, spirits rituals disguise the tensions in a superficial harmony and mislead the participants to neglect them. The resulting superficial harmony is therefore ephemeral and unreliable. Even worse, as the formats and

objects of rituals become domineering and misleading, they provide individuals with a convenient way to deceive others and fabricate harmony for their own purposes. The playwright exemplifies a social relationship in which spirits rituals are abused to cause a clamorous aftermath.

The most typical banquet of deception in the play is the one Minister Lu organizes for Li Yi in Scene 37 "Reappointed to Mengmen" ("Yican Mengmen" 移參孟門). This banquet marks the start of the complete downfall of Li's life. As Li's superior, Lu utilizes the banquet to isolate Li from his lover Huo and coerce Li into marrying Lu's daughter. Lu uses the formality of spirits rituals to disguise his evil intention. When drinking spirits, Li and Lu also turns to sing several groups of songs. In each group, the songs are grafted under one tune and ended with the same sentence sung by the characters together, a setting known as *hetou* 合頭.[7] Almost formulaic in scenes of drinking spirits, *hetou* is supposed to suggest a ritualistic feast in harmony. The singing order usually starts from the presenter to the receiver. It clarifies individuals' positions in a feast, highlighting an orderly environment. Meanwhile, the same tunes and same sentences repetitively sung illustrate a harmonious atmosphere. But when singing *hetou* with Li, Lu takes the chance to ask Li three questions and successfully entrap the guest. Lu first inquires,

> I have heard that you administrator has a poem [stating] 'I refuse to go up the Tower of Looking towards the Capital.' Is that true?
>
> 聞參軍有詩。不上望京樓。然否.

Lu plots to confirm Li's authorship of a sentence that can be interpreted as Li's complaint to the imperial court. Yet Li misconceives Lu as praising his poetic talent and affirms it in a modest way, which offers Lu the evidence to impeach him in front of the emperor. In the second step, Lu asks about Li's family and attempts to convince Li to marry someone with a higher social status.

Li refuses and avows his loyalty to Huo. The affecting, moving response unfortunately offends Lu because Li fails to sense that Lu uses the phrase "the higher social status" to refer to his own family. Lu's last question inquires if Li has sent any messages home. In so doing, Lu schemes to block Li's contact with Huo. Informing Lu about his letter to Huo, Li unintentionally enables Lu to impede his connection to Huo. After he knows about the letter, Lu utilizes the messenger who sends Li's letter to Huo and misleads Huo to believe that Li has married the daughter in Lu family. Although the banquet seems harmonious with characters singing *hetou*, it is rife with deception and conspiracy and allows Lu to gradually approach his selfish purpose. Immediately after the banquet, Lu cannot wait to start all his intrigues. Also, beginning from this banquet, Lu keeps a close watch on Li by keeping Li in his army and later his mansion. Li can do nothing but obey Lu's command; otherwise not only he would risk punishment, but also would endanger his his lover.

The banquet between Li and Lu highlights the confusion resulted from abusing ritual format and objects. It mirrors the historically famous "Banquet of Hongmen" ("Hongmeng yan" 鴻門宴), which is recorded in "The Biography of Xiang Yu" ("Xiang Yu Benji" 項羽本紀) in *Shiji* 史記. The host Xiang Yu 項羽 (232-202 BCE), suggested by his chief military counselor Fan Zeng 范增 (278-204 BCE), planned the banquet to kill the guest Liu Bang 劉邦 (256-195 BCE), Xiang's competitive rival in the contention for throne. In both banquets discussed here, the spirits rituals are exploited for the sake of political gain. Liu survived and left the banquet unharmed due to the successful stratagem of his military counselor Zhang Liang 張良 (about 250-186 BCE). The story, however, coins the phrase "Banquet of Hongmen" as a term for a deceptive, disastrous feast. In such a feast, the ritual format is maintained and even over-stressed to disguise the host's malicious, selfish intentions. Spirits are necessary to fabricate and fortify a

seemingly harmonious relationship between the host and the guest. Misled by the host's ritualistic treatment, the guest inadvertently jeopardizes his own life and wealth. Although Confucian rituals aim to cultivate individuals and harmonize tensions, the involvement of utilitarian purposes in those feasts overturns the rituals' function, resulting in misfortune and chaos.

Notably, Xiang's "Banquet of Hongmen" failed mainly due to Xiang's overemphasis on ritual formats. At the beginning of the banquet at Hongmen, aware of Xiang and Fan's maneuver, Liu conducted himself humbly in front of Xiang. Although by then he was not an inferior of Xiang, Liu sat at a position for the low-ranking minister while Xiang sat at the position of the main host.[8] Xiang, observing Liu's subservient, ritualistic behavior, believed that Liu respected him and did not want to compete with him. The host became unwilling and finally gave up the plan to murder Liu. Xiang thus lost his best chance to rid of his primary opponent in order to secure his claim for the throne. Liu later defeated Xiang and founded the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). Unlike Fan who detected the deception in Liu's behavior, Xiang misconceived Liu's superficial ritual observances as a sincere submissive gesture. The historical banquet at Hongmen exemplifies a feast in which both the host and the guest abuse spirits rituals. The looser is the one who overestimates the dependability of the ritualistic behaviors.

Making the same mistake as Xiang Yu, Li suffers from his own "Banquet at Mengmen" by his preoccupation with formulaic practices of rituals, which makes Li vulnerable to Lu's intrigues. Because Lu's banquet maintains all the external appearances of spirits rituals, Li conceives this banquet the same as the previous ones organized by the virtuous General Liu Gongji. Assigned to Yumen, Li serves as a secretary in his friend the General Liu's army. Although Liu is Li's superior, the General frequently feasts with Li.[9] Liu treats Li as a friend

instead of an inferior. The banquets strengthen the connection between the two characters. Lu's banquet, in appearance, looks like those hosted by Liu. Lu and Liu both drink with Li to show their respect and express their happiness of having such a helpful assistant. They praise Li's unparalleled talent and invite him to accomplish military feats with them. *Hetou* is also sung in these banquets. These similarities in ritual formalities mislead Li to consider Lu as a friendly, generous superior as Liu, who Li praises as extremely polite or to translate literally from Chinese "the General practices many rituals 將軍多禮數" (*ZCJ* sc. 31, 117). At the end of Lu's banquet in Scene 37, Li uses a similar sentence to venerate Lu, "Obviously, your highness practices generous rituals. 自是將軍禮數寬" (141).[10] Overstressing "*lishu* 禮數," the formalities of ritual, Li fails to investigate Lu's true intentions disguised under the spirits rituals . As indicated in the first chapter, Confucian rituals require a balance between inner thoughts and outer practices. Such balance ensures harmony. The format and appearance of rituals should never surpass individuals' inner morality and sincerity. Even as a successful Confucian scholar, Li still overestimates the importance of the outer practice of ritual. He considers an auspicious ritual feast as analogous to the host's moral virtue. The misconception of ritual not only causes Li to be repetitively deceived by Lu but also prevents Li from even revolting against Lu.

In the later scenes, while one of the reasons for Li to obey Lu's command is Li's concern about his wife's safety, due to his Confucian upbringing and his preoccupation with ritual formats, Li always behaves respectfully and compliantly in front of Lu. In Scene 46 "Weeping as Receiving the Hairpin" ("kushou yanchai" 哭收燕釵) Li finally recognizes Lu's malevolence, but he still cannot defect from Lu. Li complains that, "rituals confine a hero. 禮數困英雄" (*ZCJ* 172). Li fails to distinguish the differences between feigned politeness and sincere respect. Even though Li does not want to accept Lu's arrangement of a new marriage, Li insists on following

the conventional routines of rituals and eventually is constrained by those ritually regulated behaviors. Notably, Li's complaints about Lu's treatment suggest that Li's ritualistic performance to Lu involves neither sincerity nor respect but covertly contains resentment. Yet it is due to Li's own pretend courtesy that offers Lu a chance to gradually implement his schemes and deprive Li's freedom of action and expression.

In short, both the corrupted governor and the Confucian scholar should share the blame for the hypocrisy of rituals. In Scene 51 "Encountering the Knight in front of the Flowers" ("Huaqian Yuxia" 花前遇俠), observing a feast attended by Li and his two scholar friends Yunming 崔允明 and Wei Xiaqing 韋夏卿, Huangshan Ke criticizes the scholars as "eat one, watch two, take three, talk four 喫一看二拿三說四" (198). According to Shiying Hu's annotation, this dictum caricatures individuals who have got one thing while craving for some other thing (202). It illustrates the scholars, or "sour petty-minded men" ("*suanlai*" 酸俠, 198) as Huangshan Ke describes, appropriate the spirits drinking to serve for utilitarian purposes. The scholars ignore the importance of the inner practice of rituals but believe that as long as they conduct the prescribed formats of spirits rituals, the harmony would arise to benefit all participants. On the one hand, a powerful figure like the minister Lu exploits rituals for personal purposes. On the other hand, the Confucian scholars with little political influence also misunderstand the proper function of rituals. The abuse of rituals suggests a social degeneration caused by almost all the educated individuals.

Purple Hairpin depicts a corrupting society through spirits rituals. Although the play includes a few cases of spirits rituals arousing harmony like the feasts organized by General Liu, those drinking moments usually have no tensions involved. The nonsensical wedding ceremony and the feast of deception between Li and Lu illustrate the futility of rituals resulted from the

lack of inner sincerity. Moreover, because the two situations respectively represent familial and social ties, the abuse of rituals ruins the reliability of all bonds among individuals. As a Confucian society is based on rituals and relationships, the entire system collapses due to their unstable ritualistic foundation. The male and female protagonists Li and Huo are the victims suffering from this corruption. In order to save the two from their tragedies and reinforce the inner practice of rituals, Tang Xianzu suggests *zhenqing* as the ethical solution.

Spirits in the realm of *zhenqing*

In *Purple Hairpin*, the realm of *zhengqing* [sincere passion, true love, authentic emotion] is created by Huo's devoted affection to Li. The realm then evolves from a private space that only encompasses Li and Huo into a world that counters the corrupted Confucian society. When the minister Lu confines Li in his mansion and attempts to destroy Li and Huo's marriage, it is *zhenqing* that sustains the lovers' steadfast resistance against Lu's intrigues and selfishness. Although in the play *qing* [passion, love, emotion] itself cannot overcome Lu's political influence, its nature of *zhen* [sincerity, authenticity, truth, and reality] provokes the heroic *dramatis personae* Huangshan Ke to rescue the lovers from their tragedy. Unlike the Confucian society, the realm of *zhenqing* does not emphasize rituals, because there are no ritual formalities or objects to be utilized. This realm connotes genuine and consistent harmony. Such harmony embodies the main characters' emotional union and dispels tension and conflicts.

As rituals become insignificant, spirits in the realm of *zhenqing* function as a stimulus of sincere emotion rather than a ritual object. Intoxication, *zui* 醉 in Chinese, appears to be a frequent and pleasing state of enjoying spirits. In Confucian society, to avoid potential chaos and violation of rituals, individuals should never overdrink. In the scenes discussed in the previous

section, none of the characters gets intoxicated in a banquet. But in the realm of *zhenqing*, intoxication is exalted and incites the characters' union of minds. Spirits and intoxication catalyze the sympathetic feelings among individuals and establish connections between lovers and friends.

In *Purple Hairpin*, Huo and Li affirm their vow of *qing* in two scenes of drinking spirits. In both cases, the harmony highlighted by spirits dispels Huo's concern about Li's loyalty and mitigates the despondency resulting from the lovers' imminent separation. Scene 16 "The Vow of Incense in a Flower Garden" ("Huayuan Mengxiang" 花院盟香) features the first affecting and sincere harmony between the lovers. Setting in the Hundred Flowers Garden (Baihua Yuan 百花園), the scene constructs a utopia exclusively for Li and Huo.[11] Their public and ritualistic-oriented wedding ceremony by no means dispels Huo's lingering thought that Li may abandon her someday, but the garden provides the lovers with an ideal milieu to express one-another's thoughts. Touring the garden and enjoying the pleasant spring view, Li and Huo are free of the ritualistic restrictions and roam freely to show their intimacy. When they appreciate the blooming flowers together, Li presents a cup of spirits to Huo. Huo gets drunk immediately. The drunkenness is quite unexpected considering that in other scenes of ritualistic feasts Huo has never been intoxicated. Yet her intoxication becomes reasonable in regard to her surroundings – the presence of her lover, various colorful blossoms, and a beautiful spring day. The intoxication results from both the spirits and *qing* that Huo feels in her mind. In fact, rather than referring Huo's state to the complete intoxication *zui*, it is better to describe the state as *weixun* 微醺 or tipsy. *Weixun* indicates that Huo's happiness is initiated by her lover's affection and advanced by the spirits. While Huo enjoys the accompaniment of her lover, Li also adores Huo's state of

weixun. Drinking spirits marks the happiest moment during the lovers' tour in the garden. The characters are deeply charmed by one-another and thus achieve their emotional union.

The harmony emerged in this utopian garden dissolves the tension between the lovers. Soon after the drinking moment, Li's page enters the garden and tells Li that the civil examination is coming. Li thus decides to leave in a few days. Huo becomes upset when hearing about Li's decision. She begins to worry that Li may marry another woman once he has succeeded in the exam. The page, together with the news he brings, seems to disturb the harmony between Huo and Li. However, the page quickly withdraws. The lovers' utopia retrieves its previous status that enables Huo and Li to solve their tension successfully. After Huo expresses her melancholy concern to Li, the husband composes and writes down their vow of *qing* on a piece of precious silk paper. Reading the lyrics of the vow, Huo understands Li's heart that he would like to have her as his wife for life. She later says,

> You have such thought. I really appreciate it.
>
> 李郎有此心。奴家謝也。(64)

In this utopia of *zhenqing* developed through spirits sharing, the lovers' affection makes the impending separation tolerable for Huo. Moreover, in the affecting milieu, Li's departure even provides an opportunity for the lovers to further understand one-another's hearts. The harmony in the garden relieves Huo's anxiety and also fortifies the lovers' emotional union.

Li and Huo's love vows are reinforced in, again, another spirits sharing featured in Scene 25 "Farewell at Yangguan" ("Zheliu Yangguan" 折柳陽關). Depicting the farewell between the lovers, the scene is much more sorrowful than Scene 16. But the two in fact share many similarities. First, spirits are also served in Scene 25. It seems self-contradictory that the beverages are consumed to rejoice in union and also to grieve over separation. Yet in both

situations drinking spirits provokes genuine harmony between the lovers. In Scene 25, when Li is departing for the front fortress Yumen, Huo serves him spirits as a farewell toast. After drinking the spirits presented by Huo, Li requires an additional cup to delay his departure. Spirits create and prolong the last moment for the lovers to cherish their physical union. Second, a utopia for the lovers is also constructed under the stimulation of spirits. There are two turns of drinking and spirits-presenting between Li and Huo. In each turn, they sing six songs grafted under one tune, "Northern Parasitic Grass" ("Bei Jishengcao" 北寄生草) in the first turn and "Sober up from Intoxications" ("Jie Sancheng" 解三酲) in the second. Instead of singing the formulaic, ritualistic *hetou*, the characters repeat both tunes for an unusually long time. The singing part illustrates a long, intimate communication in which Huo and Li, sharing the same mood, are the only ones involved. In this scene of departure, Li has many servants and soldiers accompanying him, and also, Huo's mother and maid are joining Huo to bid Li farewell. But at the drinking and singing moment, the lovers build themselves a private space. In this short yet utopian circumstance, the lovers articulate their reluctance to be separated and reiterate their passion to one another. While Huo again expresses her concern about Li's loyalty, Li recalls their love vows to dispel Huo's worry. The love vows link the two utopian states of spirits sharing scenes together. Like the toast of love, the farewell toast emphasizes and reinforces the emotional connections between the husband and wife.

This farewell scene later becomes one of the most precious memories for Huo to reminisce about her lover and their affection. In Scene 52 "The Union of Swords and Hairpins" ("Jianhe Chaiyuan"劍合釵圓), Huo, after finally reunites with Li, chastises Li that

> When we sing the farewell at Yangguan. There were so many words. Now, you do not mention them anymore.

唱別陽關時節。多少話來。都不提了。(208)

Although Huo mistakenly blames Li for forgetting their vows of love, she indicates that the love vows reiterated in the scene of farewell sustain her loyalty and affection to Li during the years of his absence. The harmony depicted in Scene 25 not only alleviates the misery of Li's difficult yet inevitable departure, but also grants Huo with the confidence in her marriage when her husband is distanced from home.

The differences between the lover's wedding ceremony and their private drinking establish the contrasts between the futility of rituals and the efficiency of *zhenqing*. In Confucian society, Li and Huo's relationship is established through rituals like *hejin*. The ritual symbolizes the physical union of the characters but guarantees no persistence of their connection. In comparison, in the realm of *zhenqing*, the lovers build themselves a private, non-ritualistic utopia based on the genuine, intense passion exalted through spirits. In other word, spirits help to create a utopian space that allows harmony to emerge between the lovers. The harmony ensures Li and Huo's emotional union and guarantees their love even when they experience their mournful separation. In the play, Huo and Li's physical connection can be easily broken by the abuse of rituals, but their union of minds in *zhenqing* never ceases to assist the struggle against the social corruptions.

Although Huo and Li are suffered from Lu's intrigues, they both refuse to betray one another. While Lu confines Li in the mansion, preventing Li from returning home, the minister also deceives Huo to believe that Li has abandoned her and married another woman. Lu predicts that after hearing the heartbreaking news, Huo will either die of resentment and lovesickness or marry someone else, and then the husband, after knowing that he has no chance to reunite with Huo, will marry Lu's daughter. Lu is quite confident that his subterfuge will destroy Li and

Huo's marriage. However, Lu only succeeds at his first step: he misleads Li and Huo into believing that his/her spouse has married someone else. Nonetheless, Lu's plot fails to go any further. Both Li and Huo do not betray their marriage even when they have heard that the other one has changed his/her affections. Abusing rituals and his political power, Lu blocks the physical reunion of Li and Huo. Yet he cannot eradicate the lovers' *zhenqing* to one another.

The lovers' *zhenqing* solidifies their spiritual union, but to overcome the evil force of the minister Lu and physically reunite with one another, Huo and Li need other characters' help. As the only weapon that Li and Huo can use to fight against Lu, the lovers' *zhenqing* needs to expand beyond the limitation of a romantic relationship and bring helpers into the utopian realm. When the utopian realm of *zhenqing* is enlarged and empowered by influential characters that are not necessarily lovers, it can defeat the corrupt Confucian society and secure Li and Huo's spiritual and physical union. The expansion of *zhenqing* hence is a process to moderate *qing*, the private, romantic elements of love, and to strengthen *zhen*, the characteristic of deep sincerity that can arouse sympathy among not only lovers but also friends and even strangers. *Zhen* cultivates *zhenqing* into an ethic that can be appreciated and shared by the public and bring outside power into the realm of *zhenqing*.

In the play, the expansion of *zhenqing* connects the realm to an alternate world – the world of knight (*xia* 俠) that is distanced from both the Confucian society and the realm of *zhenqing*— and introduce an omnipotent outsider Huangshan Ke into the realm. The realm is thus empowered and advanced under the help of the heroic knight and becomes capable of rectifying the corruption in the Confucian society. Notably, in this process, spirits facilitate the expression of the ethic and also accelerate all the connections.

Huangshan Ke, who has another alias as " the gallant knight (*haoxia* 豪俠)," illustrates the playwright's conception of "knight," an individual who possesses great personal power but does not abuse it due to his heart of *zhen*. Specifically, the quality of *zhen* enables the knight to balance Confucian virtues and Daoist freedom. In Scene 49 "Realize the Dream by the Morning Window" ("Xiaochuang Yuanmeng" 曉窗圓夢), Huangshan Ke's servant describes his master as

> who has no righteousness by pulling out the sword?
> spending the gold, he [has] humanity.
> 拔劍誰無義，
> 揮金卻有仁。(189)

"Pulling out the sword" and "spending the gold" are non-Confucian actions. In fact, they are not ritualistic behaviors. But such behaviors never hurt the Confucian virtues of righteousness and humanity in the knight's heart. Instead, the knight conducts the two actions to demonstrate the virtues in his heart. The knight exemplifies Wang Yangming's idea of "the perfect conflation of knowing and acting." The knight's heart follows Confucian virtues with absolute *zhen*, so his behaviors will never become immoral even though they are not restrained by ritualistic regulations. *Zhen* is the core principle for Huangshan Ke to behave freely without violating any moral code. In short, although Huangshan Ke's preference to individual freedom distances himself from the human society that is rife with connections and relationships, his *zhen* suggests the possibility for a person with a similar ethos to become his true friend.

In the feast between Bao Siniang and Huangshan Ke in Scene 48 "The Drunken Knight Casually Comments" ("Zuixia Xianping*"* 醉俠閒評), Bao functions as an intermediary that finally unite Huangshan Ke and Huo Xiaoyu even though Huo is absent. There are two reliable

friendships of *zhen* and *zhenqing* formed in the feast. The first is between Huangshan Ke and Bao, and the second is between Huangshan Ke and Huo. These two connections bring Huangshan Ke into the realm of *zhenqing*.

The feast is Bao and Huangshan Ke's first meeting, yet the two characters' *zhen* eliminates their strangeness. Bao shares Huangshan Ke's characteristics of a knight. Bao acts as the matchmaker at Li and Huo's wedding. Unlike other matchmakers who serve all their costumers because of money, Bao despises people who are "generally wealthy and honored 如常富貴" (183). She is only willing to help the ones like Li and Huo who have "distinctive romantic/passionate manners 越樣風流" (183), a standard that requires not only external beauty but also internal outstanding properties. This unique qualification suggests Bao's embodiment of *zhen*. She follows her heart without being corrupted by wealth and materials. She disobeys the general behavior codes on her occupation but focuses on the core idea of her job, which is to arrange marriages for people who have *zhenqing* to one another. In short, Bao is an honorable, chivalrous matchmaker. When Bao meets Huangshan Ke in the feast, Bao senses that he "is a person with *qing* and is not a ferocious youth. 多情非惡少" (183). Huangshan Ke, observing Bao, also feels she is a person similar to him. The ethic of *zhenqing* initiates a connection between the two people who meet for the first time and have not yet talked to one another.

As the feast starts, spirits offer a chance for Huangshan Ke and Bao to understand fully their *zhen* and ignite their bond. After they show their mutual admiration, Huangshan Ke invites Bao to drink spirits with him by saying, "pointing at the silver bottles, let's pour [spirits] from them together 指銀瓶共傾倒" (184). The several tunes they sing when drinking reveal that the two characters are sincerely enjoying the beverages. For example Bao sings lyrics like

the golden [spirits] cup is small. [We] dispel the great casual resentment in it.

金盃小。把偌大的閒愁向此消。(184)

and

wind-and-clouds-like enterprise, how could [I] discard the chance to talk and laugh in front of the wine cup.

風雲事業。忍負尊前談笑。(184)

Huangshan Ke also mentions

The dream of the Southern River area is far away. Thinking carefully after sobering up from intoxication

江南一夢迢遙。酒醒後思量着。(184)

Unlike the tunes in all the scenes of spirits discussed before, the tunes sung by Huangshan Ke and Bao indicate no specific purpose for their drinking. As indicated by the lyrics, Huangshan Ke and Bao neither take advantage of one another nor express and confirm one's loyalty. They drink spirits because they like to do so and have no distracting concerns in mind. The characters' *zhen* illustrated through their way of drinking solidifies their friendship. At the end of the feast, Huangshan Ke again recommends Bao to drink a large cup of spirits with him. On the one hand, the suggestion indicates Bao and Huangshan Ke's unusual drinking capacity. On the other hand, it also indicates both characters' sincere fondness to spirits. Huangshan Ke then says to Bao that,

Siniang, it is only our first smile together, and yet we know what's on each other's mind.

四娘一笑相逢咱兩人心上曉。(185)

Even though it is their first meeting, their drinking experience makes Huangshan Ke consider Bao as a true friend, a person who can understand his mind without words.

The friendship between Huangshan Ke and Bao Siniang suggests a relationship based on *zhen* and *zhenqing* that is different from the one between Huo Xiaoyu and Li Yi. This friendship is not defined by romance. Although Bao in her young age is a courtesan in a royal family and she serves Huangshan Ke spirits in the feast, her relationship with Huangshan Ke is by no means about sexuality or love. It is between two people who have the heart of *zhen*. Neither rituals nor languages can illustrate the shared *zhen*, but by drinking spirits the characters can observe and understand one another. In other words, while rituals and languages may be abused to deceive others, the way one drinks spirits demonstrates his/her true thoughts and personality. The beverages thus provide individuals with a trustworthy and convenient way to discover their similar hearts and achieve emotional union. Drinking spirits generates harmony between Huangshan Ke and Bao. This harmonious milieu then lays the foundation for the emotional union between Huangshan Ke and Huo Xiaoyu.

Feeling sympathetic to Huo, Bao Siniang helps to establish a bond between Huangshan Ke and Huo, who is absent and does not know of the feast. Specifically, because by drinking spirits Huangshan Ke has become a close friend with Bao, Bao is able to transmit her feelings and concerns for Huo to him. In so doing, Bao arouses the similar sympathy in the knight's heart. Bao is sympathetic with Huo. Beginning with Li's departure, Bao continues to visit Huo to show her concern for Huo, even though Bao receives no monetary compensation. Indeed, Bao visits Huo directly before meeting Huangshan Ke. After they drink and understand one another's *zhen*, Huangshan Ke asks Bao's origin to further their knowing of each other. This moment of emotional union provides Bao the chance to recount Huo's experiences. It is worth noting that before Bao comes to the feast, Huangshan Ke has already heard of Huo's tragedy from the innkeeper. Huangshan Ke, expresses his pity, yet has not expressed any sincere concerns. It is

only upon receiving Bao's narrative that he feels deeply sympathetic with Huo. Therefore, it is through Huangshan Ke's cordial friendship with Bao that allows Bao to underline Huo's ethic of *zhenqing* for Huangshan Ke and provoke the friendship between Huangshan Ke and Huo. Later in the scene, Huangshan Ke, as a male knight who distances himself from the world, even weeps for Huo. Having Bao as an intermediary, Huangshan Ke understands Huo's heart of *zhenqing* and considers her a true friend even without meeting her.

In addition to this shared ethic, spirits, specifically intoxication, strengthen the three characters' emotional ties, which ultimately inspire Huangshan Ke to save Huo from her tragedy. Near the end of the scene, Huangshan Ke is quite drunk. In his drunken state, he asks his servants to organize a banquet in Huo's mansion. The hero's unexpected command even confuses the servant who believed he knew his master well. But Huangshan Ke, in a very short time, develops a means to bring Li home. In the harmonious feast, intoxication intensifies Huangshan Ke's sympathy for Huo and catalyzes him to action. Although Confucianism considers intoxication harmful to one's decent behaviors and one's moral virtues, Huangshan Ke's drunkenness reinforces his virtues of "righteousness" and "humanity." Intoxication, an indication of chaos in Confucian conceptions, stimulates virtual behavior, while the moral rituals, as indicated in the previous section, actually result in social chaos. The ethic of *zhenqing* is the determinant factor to stimulate spirits and intoxication's positive function. The ethic successfully connects the powerful, individual knight into the realm of *zhenqing*. Although he does not ultimately settle in this realm, Huangshan Ke swiftly resolves the issues for Li and Huo before he moves on.

Huangshan Ke then becomes the main character that empowers and further enlarges the realm of *zhenqing*. In the scenes following, Huangshan Ke uses his martial arts skills and

cunning maneuver to unite the lovers and punish the corrupted minister Lu. Moreover, because he helps to inform the emperor about the romance between Li and Huo, Huangshan Ke creates a chance for the society of ritual and the realm of *zhenqing* to merge. Because the emperor, the highest ruler in Confucian society, is moved by the lovers' experiences and Huangshan Ke's heroic behaviors, the society of ritual accepts and embraces the ethic of *zhenqing*.

The absence of spirits: harmony of the society of ritual and the realm of *zhenqing*

When the realm of *zhenqing* is empowered and the lovers finally reunite, spirits, the stimulus and catalyst of *zhenqing*, are no longer essential. The last presentation of spirits is featured in Scene 52 "The Union of Swords and Hairpin" ("Jianhe Chaiyuan" 劍合釵圓). The beverages, for the last time, are expected to generate the harmony between the lovers in the realm of *zhenqing*. In the scene, Huangshan Ke brings Li to Huo's mansion. When Li finally meets Huo, Huo, suffering from her fatal lovesickness and blaming Li for abandoning her, refuses to talk to Li. Huangshan Ke thus reminds Li to present Huo a cup of spirits to retrieve their previous relationship. Understanding Huo's *zhenqing* to Li, Huangshan Ke never doubts that the lovers' misunderstanding will be dispelled. He suggests Li,

> the spirits, can be used to dispel the resentment and forget the melancholy. Only a little bit of ([Huangshan Ke] points at Li) angelica[12] is as effective as the resurrection alchemy.
>
> 酒呵。能消鬱塊忘憂散。只一味〔指生介〕當歸勾七還。(207)

According to Huangshan Ke, the beverages are like the "induction medicine" ("*yao yinzi*" 藥引子), a medicinal ingredient that cannot cure the disease but is added to the medicinal herbs to incite the herbs' effects. The beverages are suggested to evoke the herb – the return of Li to be

effective. Surprisingly, Huo refuses to drink the spirits presented by Li. She is described to "use her left hand to hold Li's arm and throw the cup to the ground 左手握生臂擲盃于地" and immediately "sign a few times and fall into a coma on the ground. 長歎數聲倒地悶絕" (207). The beverages seem to lose their function to stimulate emotional union between the lovers.

Nonetheless, the refusal of spirits highlights the magical curing power of *zhenqing*. Without help of the "induction medicine", the dying wife recovers fully from her fatal disease because of her and her lover's *zhenqing* to each other. When Huo sinks into a coma, Li is the only person who can wake her up. Recalling their previous vows of love, Huo gradually convalesces. When Li puts the purple hairpin, their token of *qing*, into Huo's hair, Huo almost recovers her previous charm and beauty. The lover's *zhenqing* is like a panacea for Huo. The lovers then again write down their vows in a precious silk paper, like what they have done in Scene 16. The Huo mansion becomes the utopia for Li and Huo to reunite.

Compared to the lovers' previous utopia, this one in the mansion suggests the strengthening and expansion of *zhenqing*. First, only the symbols of *zhenqing* like the hairpin and the paper with vows are involved in this uotpia. Even the spirits, previously a catalyst of the lovers' *zhenqing*, are considered as unnecessary and are thus excluded. *Zhenqing* between Li and Huo is strengthened, and no longer needs a stimulus like spirits. *Zhengqing* becomes the single core element to build and sustain the utopia of love. Second, this utopia is no longer a private space exclusively for Huo and Li. Instead, Huo's mother, Huo and Li's servants, and Bao are all present to join Huo and Li's conversation and celebrate the lovers' union.[13] The sexual allusion of the lovers' *qing* fades but the ethic of *zhenqing* is underlined and shared by all the characters who are sympathetic with Li and Huo's experiences. A reliable, familial-oriented harmony is

aroused in the mansion. As the ending scene shows, such harmony even expands to influence the Confucian society.

The absence of spirits in the final scene "The General Liu Announces the Emperor's Commendation" ("*jiezhen xuan'en*" 節鎮宣恩) likewise demonstrates that *zhenqing* has replaced spirits and function as the essential ethical code for harmony. In the scene, Liu Gongji, under the emperor's command, visits the Huo mansion, and brings the emperor's commendation to Huo and Li. As stated in the rescripts, the emperor associates the story of Huo and Li with "righteousness of the husband and wife 伉儷之義," and also equates Huangshan Ke's performance with "the tradition of a heroic knight 任俠之風," even though Huangshan Ke has already left the mansion. The emperor would like Huo, Li, and Huangshan Ke to "become famous under the sun. 揚名于白日" (213). In so doing, the emperor vindicates the three characters as the models for moral education. He thus approves and exalts *zhenqing* as the key ethic to upholding social harmony.

The imperial commendation announced in the lovers' utopia symbolizes the combination of the realm of *zhenqing* and Confucian society. After accepting the emperor's bestowments, all the positive *dramatis personae* gather in the Huo mansion to celebrate the happiness and union. When Liu inquires Li about the detail of the story of the purple hairpin, i.e. the story of Li and Huo's romance, the characters including Li, Huo, Huo's mother, Bao, Cui, and Wei begin to sing not only *hetou* but also *tongchang* 同場 to summarize the story. *Tongchang* means all the characters sing a song together on the stage. It creates the most harmonious and auspicious moment in the play. Such scenario should feature spirits like many other plays ending with "the great union (*da tuanyuan*)." But Li requires no banquet. The theme of *hetou* and *tongchang* focuses exclusively on the couple's *zhenqing*. *Zhenqing* has replaced spirits to supplement rituals.

The overemphasis and over-dependence on the ritual object is thus rectified. In addition, *zhenqing* also enables the characters to achieve a balance between exalting inner passion in their lyrics and performing the outer ritualistic practice of singing in the format of *hetou*. Hence, the most prosperous harmony in the entire play is produced when the characters are singing *hetou* and *tongchang*. As the fundamental ethic, *Zhenqing* recovers the proper function of Confucian rituals for harmony.

Conclusion

In *Purple Haripin*, spirits function similarly to a chemical catalyst in a combined reaction. A catalyst does not participate but induces the progress of the reaction. Similarly, spirits induce *zhenqing* to serve as the foundation of Confucian rituals, and then withdraw so that the rituals and *zhenqing* could fuse on their own. The successful combination between the Confucian society and the realm of *zhenqing* finally brings about the ideal harmony.

Notably, the playwright further extends harmony in the theatrical domain to the viewers' reality through spirits. The beverages mentioned in the ending poem of *Purple Hairpin* connect the individuals in the real world and the characters on stage. The poem's first four lines highlight the ceaseless power of *zhenqing*. The third and fourth lines describe,

> the stream of resentment is here for years,
>
> the debt of passion is heavy for days and nights
>
> 恨流歲歲年年在。
>
> 情債朝朝暮暮多。

Although they are opposite emotions, both resentment and passion demonstrate the characters' deep sincerity, i.e. *zhen*, to their lovers. The sincerity continues for days and years without fading.

But in the following two lines, the playwright points out the illusory nature of the theatrical world. The sentences

cook the yellow millets is not in the northern lane;

over-pouring green ants is at the southern bough.

炊徹黃粱非北里，

斟翻綠蟻是南柯。

relate the two famous dreams, "the dream of yellow millets" ("huangliang meng" 黃梁夢) and "the dream of southern bough" ("nanke meng" 南柯夢), to Li and Huo's story. "Green ants," an alias for alcoholic beverages, symbolizes the spirits in *the Dream of Southern Bough* and also *Purple Hairpin*. It seems that Tang Xianzu is suggesting the entire play of *Purple Hairpin*, together with his emphasis on *zhenqing* and the final great union, as an illusory dream. However, the last two lines

Why does the flower attach with the sweet-scented osmanthus;

it is for [viewers] to hit their wine cup and sing and laugh.

花封桂癖知何意，

贏得敲尊一笑歌。(214)

invite viewers to experience and share the happiness of *zhenqing*. "The flower attach with the sweet-scented osmanthus" implies to the *zhenqing* of Li and Huo.[14] Following the previous sentence that suggests the illusion of the entire play, this line queries about the purpose of depicting the illusory story of *zhenqing*. The last line then provides the answer by involving the viewers into the theatrical world. "Hit their wine cup" depicts an image in which the viewers are drinking spirits when enjoying watching *Purple Hairpin*. While "the green ants" refers to the alcoholic beverages in the dream-like play, the phrase "hit their wine cup" indicates spirits in the

viewers' world. Spirits penetrate the boundaries between not only the different realms in the play but also the theater and the reality. The dream, play, and reality all have spirits consumed. The beverages function as an intermediary to enable *zhenqing* to shine throughout. While the characters celebrate the final union of the lovers, the viewers are also enjoying the happy ending. *Zhenqing* produces harmony in both the theatrical stage and the reality. Be it delusional or not, viewers and *dramatis personae* alike enjoy the happiness generated by the ethic of *zhenqing*.

Chapter Three

Liberation or Intoxication: Analysis of Spirits in *The Story of Handan*

As indicated in the previous chapter, the romantic *qing* 情 [passion, love, emotion] between Li Yi and Huo Xiaoyu and the power of *zhen* 真[sincere, true, authentic] refer to the divide of *zhenqing* [sincere passion, true love, authentic emotion]. *Qing* suggests the sensual pleasure between the lovers; it has the possibility of being corrupted by the physical, carnal desires. *Zhen* is an inward, metaphysical status with purity and authenticity. In *The Story of Handan* 邯鄲記 (hence *Handan*), the divide in *zhenqing* is further clarified. *Zhen*—with the meanings of truth, purity, and authenticity—is exalted to be a metaphysical ethic in human heart that manifests the ultimate truth of Dao, but indicating the physical and material indulgence, *qing* is criticized for resulting in limitation and corruption of human beings. Demonstrated by Daoist deities, such as Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, *zhen* grants individuals with a broad perspective that allows one to recognize material illusions and see no distinction between binary elements. In contrast, as a characteristic of ordinary people, *qing* suggests the characteristic of *chi* 痴, which translates as "addictive" and "infatuated." *Chi* refers to individuals' deep passion for carnal pleasures. It limits people's viewpoint to considering material abundance as their ultimate life goal. People of *chi* thus involuntarily suffer from the infinite cycle of chasing wealth and consequently losing it. In the play, spirits illustrate comparisons and contrasts between Daoist deities of *zhen* and ordinary people of *chi*. Both deities and people drink spirits, yet they experience opposite effects which results in contrasting conceptions of intoxication and sobriety. A dispute on intoxication and sobriety between the two entities further extends to a discussion of dreams and awakening.

Because spirits are the single object that is commonplace in both the deities' immortal island and the human world, the beverages function as a key intermediary for the deities to satirize people's *chi* and inspire them to attain *zhen* in their hearts and enjoy the absolute freedom of Dao.

Adapted from the Tang dynasty era novella *The Story in the Pillow* 枕中記, *Handan* is mainly about the male protagonist Lu Sheng 盧生 being enlightened by Lü Dongbin, one of the Eight Deities (*baxian* 八仙) in Daoist tradition. In order to find a person to sweep the fallen peach blossoms at the gate of Penglai Island 蓬萊島, Lü descends to the secular world and attempts to deliver a person to the immortal island. As his first effort in the Yueyang Tower 岳陽樓[15] fails, Lü goes to a restaurant on the Handan Road[16] and meets Lu, a poor, unsuccessful Confucian scholar in his twenties. After a short conversation with Lü, Lu feels sleepy while waiting for the innkeeper to cook a meal of yellow millets for him. The deity then provides a magical pillow for Lu to rest. On the pillow, Lu dreams of a prosperous life rife with "spirits (*jiu* 酒), sexuality (*se* 色), wealth (*cai* 財), and arrogance (*qi* 氣)," the four elements standing for human corruption in *Handan*. Through several ups and downs in his official career, Lu achieves the highest position as the prime minister in the imperial court. Lu wakes up when in his dream he dies at a ripe old age of eighty, yet not even by then is his meal of yellow millets ready. The contrast of time and the process of awakening after death enables Lu to realize his sixty-year life is nothing but a dream. The similarities between the dream and the human world inspire Lu to question if his "real" life is also illusory. Then under Lü's instructions, Lu finally understands that all his passion for the material world focuses on the temporary objects that he is destined to lose. His physical attachments are deceptive and meaningless, preventing him from comprehending and achieving *zhen*. Disentangled from the burden of material possessions, Lu goes with Lü to the immortal island. Yet in the island, Lu still struggles to know if the new realm

is real, i.e. *zhen* in Chinese. Refusing to clarify for Lu whether or not their world is the place of *zhen*, the deities in the island instruct Lu to complete the final step of true awakening (*xing* 醒). This ultimate awakening is not the awakening from dream, but from the physical divide of *zhenqing* into its metaphysical part residing in human heart. Once a person is truly awake, s/he can be fully liberated and roam freely in the universe.

That Lu becomes a Daoist immortal indicates two steps to achieve absolute freedom. First is to realize the illusion of human life, and second is to get rid of the conceptions of the binary distinctions, such as good vs. bad, that define the human condition. In both steps, with the stimulating nature and dual representations of *zhen* and *chi*, spirits on the one hand illustrate the contrast between a deity and a person. On the other hand, the beverages help the deity explain the ideas of true awakening and absolute sobriety, which are both described as *xing* in Chinese.

Drinking spirits with *zhen* and *chi*

As stated above, *zhen* and *chi* respectively summarize the nature of the metaphysical and physical divide of *zhenqing*. They also suggest the fundamental reason for the opposite results of deities' and humans' drinking spirits. Specifically, deities drink and enjoy the final liberation the spirits provide, but humans drink and further indulge in the illusory, carnal pleasures.

As an ethical manifestation of Dao, *zhen* 真 indicates the inexhaustible power in human heart. In the chapter "The Old Fisherman" ("Yufu" 漁夫) of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the fisherman, a nameless Daoist master, explains *zhen* as

> the ultimate sincerity in the most supreme status. (trans. Graham, 251)
>
> 真者，精誠之至也。(Wang, 332)

Zhen is

the means by which we draw upon Heaven, it is spontaneous and irreplaceable. Therefore the sage, taking Heaven as his model, values the genuine and is untrammelled by custom. (trans. Graham, 252)

所以受於天也，自然不可易也。故聖人法天貴真，不拘於俗。(Wang, 332)

Zhen refers to the original status of heart, a status when the heart has not digressed and has not been limited by any trivial thoughts or material desires. This original status is sincere and pure. Without any conception of differentiations, an original heart conceives a myriad of things as one.

Once a person achieves *zhen* in his/her heart, s/he becomes a Daoist deity. Daoist deities, often referred to as *xianzhen* 仙真[17] and *zhenren* 真人, literarily translates to "celestial truth" and "true person" respectively. In *Zhuangzi*'s chapter "The Teacher Who Is The Ultimate Ancestor" ("Da Zongshi" 大宗師), *zhenren* are described as the ones

not allowing the thinking of the heart to damage the Way [Dao], not using what is of man to do the work of Heaven. (trans. Graham, 85)

不以心捐道，不以人助天。 (Wang, 74)

Zhenren do not waste force to adjust "the work of Heaven" and set definite standards for the right and the wrong or the desirable and the undesirable. In other words, *zhenren* have no human preference or carnal desires. They consider fortune the same as misfortune, happiness the same as tragedy, and life the same as death. These individual beings

[are] one with what they liked and one with what they disliked, one when they were one and one when they were not one. (trans. Graham, 85)

其好之也一，其弗好之也一。其一也一，其不一也一。(Wang, 77)

Although they are named as "true men," *zhenren* are not the opposite of the "fake man." What they do is to keep practicing and purifying *zhen* in their heart. In so doing, they expand their

perspective until it reaches the Heavens, and from which they see all the binaries and distinctions as essentially the same.

Because Daoist deities are not deluded by the material pleasure of drinking spirits, they consume the beverages and enjoy the absolute freedom aroused by the stimulating effect. In Scene 30 "Encountering the Deities" ("Hexian" 合仙), Lü describes the Eight Deities' daily life for Lu,

> for day and night they practice inner elixir alchemy, checking the *qi* of hexagrams, and reducing and adding water of kidney as well as fire of heart. Sometimes, they play incomplete Go game, pour spirits of longevity, and laugh and tour between heaven and earth.
>
> 他們無日夜演禽星。看卦氣。抽添水火。有時節點殘碁。斟壽酒。笑傲乾坤。(*HDJ*, 227)

The first half of the sentence includes three activities of the Daoist inner elixir practice. The practice aims to maintain and purify *zhen* in individual's inner body so that s/he can achieve absolute freedom.[18] The second half of the sentence suggests spirits as a stimulus for the immortals to enjoy the ultimate goal of the inner practices. The deities "laugh and tour between heaven and earth" ("xiao'ao qiankun" 笑傲乾坤) after drinking spirits. The phrase echoes the idea of free roaming in the chapter "Going Rambling Without Destination" ("Xiaoyao You" 逍遙遊) in *Zhuangzi*. The chapter describes a Daoist spiritual being in "the mountain of far-off Ku-yi" ("miao guyi shan" 藐姑射山) who

> rides the vapour of the clouds, yokes flying dragons to his chariot, and roams beyond the four seas. (trans. Graham, 46)
>
> 乘雲氣，御飛龍，而遊乎四海之外。(Wang, 14)

This Daoist master has no specified gender or definite form. Without any limitations of self-identity, this individual being is able to roam freely in the universe. Such a being of non-being is a prototype as well as an ideal form of Daoist deities. Compared to the unknown master in the mount Ku-yi, the Eight Deities are in an inferior achievement of Dao. They have not reached the level of selflessness and still maintain their human form, so they need spirits as the external incentive to enjoy the absolute freedom. Drinking spirits is thus a complement of the deities' Daoist inner practices. The beverages, though only working for a moment, liberate the deities from possible attachments remaining in their heart and purify their *zhen*. It is also reasonable to suggest that the higher achievement a deity can attain, the fewer cups of spirits s/he may consume to enjoy the freedom. Once a deity has achieved Dao through his/her practices, s/he will no longer need the stimulus, yet eternally enjoy roaming the universe.

In contrast to the deities, people are limited by their *chi* 癡 and cannot see the oneness of all the binaries. *Handan* demonstrates two levels of *chi*, which correspond to the two steps of achieving true awakening. The first level is the infatuation with the four corrupting elements, spirits, sexuality, wealth, and arrogance; the second is the endeavor to distinguish binary elements from one another. In the play, Lü encounters three people, two in the Yueyang Tower and Lu in the restaurant. All the three unenlightened individuals believe,

> spirits, sexuality, wealth, and arrogance, they are the natural and essential things for people.
>
> 酒色財氣，人之本等。(*HDJ*, 12)

While the Eight Deities endeavor to purify *zhen* and eliminate material attachments, the three people still define themselves by their material-wealth. Commoners submit their hearts under physical and material desires and chase the happiness that they are destined to lose when they die.

They restrain their hearts with meaningless, illusory enjoyments and discard the hearts' potential to achieve Dao. Moreover, yearnings for particular items naturally result in the disdain and abandonment of their opposites, which further prevent one from retrieving *zhen* and comprehending the concept of oneness. Even when Lu has understood the illusion of human world and arrived at the immortal island, he is criticized by the deities as "a man of *chi* talking about the dream" (*chiren shuomeng* 癡人說夢) because he asks how to identify what is the real (230). This demonstrative endeavor to discern the real from the unreal suggests Lu's inferior level of *chi*. Lu is still limited by the binary perspective, which also explains why he is chosen to serve as a subservient by sweeping the peach blossoms at the gate of the immortal island before he can obtain the ultimate truth. One of the deities articulates the purpose of his special practice,

> sweeping until there is no flowers or ground is not uncommon. During this moment, forgetting broom and dustpan is not *chi*. At that time, [you] ride the phoenix and crane to visit the supreme deity and achieve the ultimate truth. That is the benefit you get from riding donkey and horse to enter the dream.
> 直掃得無花無地非爲罕。這其間忘帚忘箕不是癡。那時節騎鸞鶴朝元證聖。
> 纔是你跨驢駒入夢便宜。(229)

Lu must first sweep the flowers until he forgets about the distinctions between the flowers and the grounds, and hold the broom and dustpan until he forgets the existence of the utensils. Only then, Lu will obtain the ultimate Dao. In other words, the practice is for Lu to be disentangled from the limitation of *chi* and understand the oneness of the existence and non-existence.

Although after being enlightened Lu has the chance to practice Dao in the immortal island, the scholar in his dream exemplifies how the people of *chi*, *chiren* 癡人, are misled by illusory prosperity and happiness. Specifically, people like Lu drink spirits and then misconceive

the preferable elements as stable and the harmful ones as avoidable. These biased conceptions hinder people from sensing the potential disaster cloaked by lavish drinking. In short, because *chiren* persist in separating binary elements, they fail to appreciate the liberation stimulated by spirits. Instead, they fall deeper into their illusion, and involuntarily suffer from drinking spirits.

In Scene 8 "Arrogant Banquet" ("Jiaoyan" 驕宴), spirits construct an illusion in which Lu is harmed by the happiness, honor, and admiration that he thinks he enjoys. The banquet is commanded by the emperor to congratulate Lu, Xiao Song 蕭嵩, and Pei Guangting 裴光庭 who respectively earn the top three positions in the civil examination. The powerful prime minister Yuwen Rong 宇文融 is also presented as a representative from the imperial court. Because Lu earns the first place in the civil examination, he is the main guest in the banquet. He thus receives many cups of spirits presented by the other participants and the singing girls as a gesture of veneration. Lu is deluded by the accolades and believes he will enjoy such honor forever. His poem states,

> Fragrance floats over the intoxicated ink, beauties keep hastening,
> The student of Heaven's son comes with a laugh;
> I was chosen to be the top winner by the Jade Emperor,
> Chang'e does not need an old official matchmaker.
> 香飄醉墨粉紅催。
> 天子門生帶笑來。
> 自是玉皇親判與。
> 嫦娥不用老官媒。(59)

Lu identifies himself as "the student of Heaven's son" ("tianzi mensheng" 天子門生), and therefore haughtily refuses Yuwen Rong's proposal to be his student. Lu's arrogance offends the minister, who immediately decides to seize all possible chances to punish Lu. Spirits create an illusion of nobility for Lu, and cause him to ignore the underlying danger. While Lu believes he is enjoying the great pleasures brought by spirits, he also ultimately faces grave misfortune.

The opposed results of deities and humans drinking spirits suggest different usages of the beverages. Deities consume spirits to enjoy absolute freedom. The beverages function as one of their practices to achieve Dao. But people drink and fall deeper into carnal illusions. In short, *zhenren*'s spirits are a miraculous, beneficial drink yet *chiren*'s are worldly, noxious liquor. In Scene 3 "Deliver the World" ("Dushi" 度世), Lü comes to the famous restaurant Yueyang Towerby the Lake Dongting 洞庭湖. Seeing two people drinking spirits, Lü scorns them,

> Spirits are made by deities, drunk by deities. What do you guys know about drinking spirits.
>
> 酒是神仙造。神仙喫。你這一班兒也知道喫什麽酒. (11)

Lü contends that spirits are made by deities and thus drunk by deities. Only the spirits makers know how to consume the beverages. Because people cannot understand deities' minds, people know nothing about drinking spirits.

As suggested in Scene 3, humans indeed are unaware of spirits' uniqueness but use the beverages to replace water. In contrast, deities understand and benefit from spirits' stimulating effect. Before Lü comes to the scene, the innkeeper serves spirits to the two people. The innkeeper jokes that his spirits bottle "contain water 盛水哩." Immediately, one person claims that he is going to "drink three hundred cups. 飲三百杯," and the other one says he will "drink

eight hundred cups 飲八百杯罷" (10). The sentences confuse water and spirits. It seems that the guests are drinking water instead of spirits. In other words, the two people consume spirits in the same way as they drinking water. In so doing, they misuse and waste spirits' stimulating effect. In comparison, Lü's spirits are by no means like water. After Lü comes to the restaurant and talks to the two people, the two people smell the gourd carried on Lü's back. Traditionally, a Daoist practitioner's gourd should contain magical elixir, yet the two people find that Lü's gourd contains no elixir but is full of the odor of spirits (11). Lü uses spirits to replace medical elixir. According to Lü, spirits have a function similar to or even better than elixir, echoing the previous discussion on how the Eight Deities achieve the absolute freedom of Dao by drinking spirits. The deities notice the uniqueness of spirits as a kind of beverages. They thus fully utilize the stimulating effect of the beverages to improve their Daoist achievement. The opposite usages of spirits between humans and deities also lead to the discussion of sobriety and intoxication between Lü and the two characters.

Sobriety or intoxication: drinking spirits in the dream-like life

Despite humans' *chi*, deities like Lü still attempt to deliver them to the immortal island. Spirits on the one hand demonstrate the contrast between deities and humans; on the other hand, the beverages also function as an intermediary for Lü to inspire humans to see their lives as illusion. Although humans have no conception of the freedom that deities enjoy from spirits, Lü can challenge their perception of drinking by raising a dispute on the conceptions of intoxication and sobriety. While the drinking effects are personal, only known to the drinkers, but the different understandings of sobriety and intoxication can be shared and argued. Such discussion

not only highlights the differences between *zhen* and *chi* but also helps the deity question humans' limited, biased viewpoints.

Humans in general determine the status of intoxication and sobriety exclusively through observations of the physical appearances and behaviors. In Scene 3, the two guests are irritated after hearing Lü's contempt on their qualification of drinking spirits. In response, they first call Lü's attention to their material abundance,

> I wear fine, soft silk and satin. I [drink and] eat fine, well-made tea and food. I use fine textured silver ingots.
>
> 我穿的細軟羅緞。喫的細料茶食。用的細絲錁錠。(11)

The guests think Lü distains them because they do not look affluent enough, so they declaim their appropriateness of drinking spirits by stressing their lavish lives. Then they use their material standards to despise Lü for his poor dressing,

> People such as you: [I] don't look at what you eat, [but just] look at what you wear, dirty and ragged. Our sober eyes see you the drunken man. You are too drunk even to be supported.
>
> 似你這般。不看你喫的。看你穿的哩。希泥希爛的。醒眼看醉漢。你醉漢不堪扶。(11)

The guests believe it is droll and ludicrous for Lü wearing rags to question if they, in well-made clothes, are qualified to drink spirits. Based on their "logical deduction" by observing and comparing clothes and appearance, they conclude that Lü is intoxicated and they are more sober and more honorable than Lü. Their criteria on intoxication and sobriety exclusively focus on the material level, suggesting their unawareness of the material illusion. Ironically, it is the two

guests' responses that betray their obsessions with the sensual pleasures. They indeed solidify the deity's contempt.

In contrast, the deity determines intoxication or sobriety from a metaphysical perspective. Descending to the human world, Lü plans to "casually observe the human hearts 把世人心閒看"(11). By understanding the heart, Lü evaluates the state of intoxication or sobriety. As stated above, a deity drinks spirits and enjoys unrestrained roaming. Such status may seem to be physical intoxication, because the individual has been disentangled from all the preset conceptions in his/her heart, including the idea of a proper way of walking. But in achieving absolute freedom, the person is purely sober in heart because s/he has realized all the illusions and understood the sameness of myriad things. In short, from the deity's perspective, the physical appearance is an inaccurate and meaningless indicator of intoxication and sobriety. After the two guests laugh at Lü for being intoxicated, Lü derides them by using filthy language to challenge their understanding of intoxication and sobriety,

> I will not comment on the high and low with them; or talk about the refined and the coarse. [You] said I am a drunken guy that cannot be supported. Only your sober eyes of a drunker are not blurred. [I'm] afraid that you such rustic idiots are more vulgar than me, and your damned eyes are more poisonous than mine.
> 俺也不和他評高下。說精粗。道俺個醉漢不堪扶。偏你那看醉人的醒眼不模糊。則怕你村沙勢比俺更俗。橫死眼比俺更毒。(11)

Lü does not condescend to join the discussion on material abundance and social honor. Neither is he willing to argue about whether or not he is physically intoxicated. Pointing out the foolishness of the guests' "sober eyes," the deity condemns the guests of their obsession with materiality and their negligence of heart. The seemingly sober eyes can only observe the physical appearances

and fail to see into one's heart. According to Lü, the guests are deluded by the physical and material world, losing the original *zhen* of their hearts in a way similar to a drunken man losing his mind.

The physical and metaphysical conceptions of intoxication and sobriety correspond to the opposite effects of spirits on humans and on deities. Humans' viewpoint limits them within the material world. Based on the guests' conception, the more spirits one drinks, the more physically intoxicated s/he will be. Yet for deities, the metaphysical perspective grants them with the potential to enjoy the absolute freedom. The more spirits they consume, the more sober they become. Striking people with a different understanding of intoxication and sobriety, Lü hopes to inspire the guests to possess a broad metaphysical perspective, which will help them understand the illusion of the material world. Even though the first discussion is too abstract to be comprehended by the guests, the deity does not give up. He continues to play with the ideas of intoxication and sobriety in attempt to enlighten the guests.

In his next bid, Lü criticizes the guests' obsession with materiality by directly pointing out the illusory nature of the four enjoyments – spirits, sexuality, wealth, and arrogance. He sings the tune "Climbing a Small Tower" ("Shang Xiaolou" 上小樓),

> These four elements are not your relatives or friends. These four elements are the man-made fetters … You talked about the facing emperor and ministers, a pair of son and daughter, intimate husband and wife. When the breath is not as smooth as you want, you would go where you come from. I am worried about you; I am thinking for you. When will the four elements disappear?

這四般兒非親者故。四般兒爲人造畜……你道是對面君臣。一胞兒女。帖肉妻夫。則那一口氣不遂了心。來從何處來。去從何處去。俺替你愁。俺替你想。敢四般兒那時纔住。(12)

Although the guests define their lives by the four elements, Lü clarifies that the elements are companions neither at birth nor at death. They are the secular "fetters" fabricated by humans. It is thus unreasonable that humans prefer the manmade fetters to their inborn hearts. Individuals, like the guests, constrain their hearts by the fetters, which they mistakenly consider as reliable and eternal, and hence destroy the hearts' nature of *zhen*. The question "where did you come; where will you go" queries the guests about their origin and their destination. Lü reminds the individuals of the fact that they can never settle down permanently in the secular world. The two guests are infatuated with material and physical enjoyments but lose the nature of their heart. In short, the entire tune continues Lü's main theme in his arguments about intoxication and sobriety. Previously, Lü looks intoxicated but is sober in heart. In parallel, the words, challenging the ordinary conception of the four elements, sound insane but indeed possess the transcendental power to break the material illusion. In both statements, Lü demonstrates the metaphysical sobriety under the seemingly physical intoxication. In so doing, he tries to inspire the guests to think about their metaphysical intoxication cloaked by their physical sobriety.

Yet preoccupied with material and physical pleasures, the two guests do not take Lü's words seriously. They are persistent in discerning intoxication or sobriety from the physical perspective, so they ignore the metaphysical aspect and simply equate outer intoxication with inner senselessness. Presuming that Lü is intoxicated, the guests believe Lü's words involve no logic or rationality. The words' appearance of insanity further strengthens the guests'

preconception. They thus refuse to carefully think about Lü's ideas but consider him as an absurd Daoist practitioner. They laugh at Lü,

> The practitioner of 'Er Huizi' knows nothing about *yin* and *yang* or day and night.
>
> 二會子先生一些陰陽晝夜不知。(12)

"Er Huizi" refers to a popular religion in the Ming dynasty that used magic and camouflage to deceive others. Condemning Lü as a practitioner of "Er Huizi," the two guests believe Lü's words are nothing but ravings. On the one hand, the guests are deluded by sensual pleasures and fail to realize their illusory nature. On the other hand, the material and physical attachments in the guests' hearts further foster their prejudiced attitude on language and ideas and limit their comprehension as well as imagination. The guests are too constrained by their preexisting conceptions to sense a possible meaning opposite to what they have conceived as true. Ignoring Lü's ideas and despising his appearance, the guests lose probably the only chance in their life to become an immortal. As a result, they are trapped in the fetters of the four elements and unable to enjoy the ultimate freedom in Daoism.

Although he fails, in the discussion on intoxication and sobriety, Lü tries to introduce the idea of "pure sobriety" in heart to humans. In humans' perception, the observation of superficial appearance is enough to determine the status of intoxication. But according to the deity, the physical distinction between intoxication and sobriety is meaningless. The human heart is the place where an individual should focus to keep sober. The "pure sobriety" of the human heart echoes the "ultimate awakening" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Both ideas symbolize the achievement of *zhen*. They refer to the original, unbiased status in heart that enables individuals to enjoy the freedom of Dao.

Sleep or awakening: drinking spirits in the life-like dream

Interconnecting the ideas of sobriety and awakening suggests a parallel between the binary of intoxication and sobriety and that of dream and reality. Intoxication and dream imply illusion and deception. To sober up from intoxication and to wake up from dream are both referred as *xing* in the play. Thus, the two guests' unawareness of their intoxicated hearts is parallel to their unconsciousness of their dream-like illusory life. More interestingly, that Lu Sheng drinks spirits in his sixty-year life-like illusory dream further extends that parallelism.

Lu's life in the dream is an exaggerated, dramatized reflection of the illusory life. In other words, to a mortal like Lu, his dream is a more definite illusion than the human world in which he lives. While Lu is sleeping, in his dream, however, he considers himself awake. The dream thus symbolizes the state of sleep, i.e. his metaphysical unconsciousness. Yet noticeably, because Lu has the dream on the magic pillow, the dream is also controlled by the deity. The dream thus combines the illusory elements of the human world and the ideas that the deity hopes to enlighten Lu.

In such a milieu influenced by both the illusion and the divine power, Lu's spirits drinking is also a dramatized analogy of the humans' drinking in the Yueyang Tower. In addition, the beverages are also the indicator of the deity's intervention and guide. In almost all the scenes that contain both the binary of intoxication and sobriety and that of dream and reality, various contrasts between life and death, wealth and poverty, and fortune and misfortune emerge based on these binaries. In his dream, Lu endeavors to differentiate all the binary elements from one another so that he can chase the positive and avoid the negative. But the constant and swift alternations between the positive and the negative suggest that Lu's persuasion to occupy the positive ends is futile and meaningless. In those scenes of multiple binaries, spirits are the single

item that embodies simultaneously intoxication and sobriety and are frequently presented in both sides of the binaries. The beverages dramatize the oneness that conflates the binary elements, and further caricature Lu's obsession with illusory pleasure.

Among the scenes of Lu's dream, Scene 20 "Deadly Scurry" ("Sicuan" 死竄) is the quintessential example to show how spirits illustrate the illusion of human life and the caricature induced by the divine power. The beverages trace the path in which Lu falls from one of his career zeniths to nadir, silently mocking Lu's *chi*. This scene tells Lu, who by then has been the general-in-chief of the country for years, being trapped by Yuwen Rong's evil schemes and sentenced to death by the emperor. The emperor soon agrees to lift Lu's death penalty because Lu's wife and sons cry at the gate of the imperial palace against injustice. But Lu is still banished to a distant, impoverished place. The scene includes three settings; first at Lu's luxuriant mansion, second at a small imperial feast organized especially for the condemned prisoners, and third at the place of execution. All these settings have spirits presented, calling readers' attention to analyze the functions of the beverages.

The first round of drinking spirits comes when Lu enjoys the spirits bestowed by the emperor with his wife Lady Cui 崔氏. Yet right at this celebratory moment, the news of the death sentence arrives. While spirits promote the illusion of Lu's lavish life to the climax, the illusion collapses immediately. Returning home from the imperial court, Lu gladly joins a small family reception organized by Cui. The husband and wife take turns toasting. Encouraging one another to have spirits, they play a game of exclaiming an auspicious sentence and drinking up an entire cup in each toast. Their sentences highlight "prosperity 榮" and "nobility 貴" (143), exulting their affluent life and honorable social status. "Prosperity" and "nobility" indicate the ideas of "wealth" and "arrogance" in the four elements. Meanwhile, during each toast, the

husband and wife also flirt with one another by alluding to sexual organs and erotic images, suggesting the pleasure of sexuality. The drinking moment combines all the four elements together and thus illustrates a pinnacle of Lu's material abundance. However, it is ironic that every time Lu and Cui toast, Lu's servant comes to report that an imperial army is approaching the mansion. Lu does not pay any attention to the reports until his third toast, when his sons come and cry that the soldiers are entering into the mansion. In no more than a few lines, the soldiers announce Lu's death sentence. In the first round, drinking spirits symbolizes the euphoria built on the four elements, yet for each cup Lu drinks and celebrates, the disaster marches closer. The ostensibly opposite situations are in fact tightly interconnected. In addition, the dramatic turning point from a wealthy governor wearing silk robes to a condemned prisoner who has all his properties taken by the imperial court also demonstrates the instability and illusion of ranks and the entailed material prosperity. Compared to the illusions suggested in the Scene 8 "The Arrogant Banquet," the illusion of honor and happiness demonstrated in this drinking round is much more striking. But even though danger is too close to be ignored, Lu still fails to sense that danger looms large in extreme prosperity. His heart is intoxicated and dormant, utterly constrained by *chi*.

The second round of spirit drinking in this scene continues the dramatic contrast between tragedy and happiness illustrated by spirits. While the scene's first round depicts Lu drinking spirits bestowed from the emperor, in the second setting, Lu's "last meal" and the spirits are also commanded by the emperor. However, the location of the drinking activity and Lu's identity changed. At the beginning of the scene, Lu enjoys the emperor's spirits in his great mansion as a sign of honor and wealth. Half way through the scene, Lu, as a guilty minister, has to take the imperial spirits on a coarse grass mat on his way to the execution ground. The spirits bestowed

by the emperor have once granted Lu with unparalleled glory, and now they foreshadow Lu's death. The contrasting drinking milieus featured simultaneously in one scene again question the reliability of the previous happiness and glorification entailed from ranks and material-wealth.

It is even more ironic that the entire last meal also functions as the opposing counterpart of the banquet in Scene 8. In Scene 8's banquet, Lu wears palace flowers on his hat as an honor for his achieving the first place in the exam. The banquet has pleasant songs played and sung. Lu drinks and enjoys the imperial spirits (*yujiu* 御酒). In parallel, in this beheading meal, a small flag with the character 斬 [behead] replaces the palace flowers. Yet wearing the flag and having the palace flowers on the hat are both described as "wearing the flowers" ("chahua" 插花, 145). Both meals are accompanied by music, but the gong and drum that are used to keep order in the beheading meal take the place of the pleasant songs. Lu, again holding a cup of imperial spirits, now finds it difficult to have even one sip. The two imperial banquets share many similar elements but meanwhile represent two opposite situations. The discrepancies presented in the same form of banquet suggest the analogies of glorification and punishment. However Lu considers the two banquets as two extremes; he yearns for the previous banquet and laments on his present tragedy. Because he fails to realize the sameness of the two, Lu has to suffer from the frequent alterations between the opposing representations of spirits, "flowers," and music. In other words, as long as Lu has attached his heart with those objects and preferred one to the other, he binds his own life with instability.

Notably, the second round of drinking suggests the illusion of not only material happiness but also the physical catastrophe. While Lu drinks the imperial spirits, his savior is also on the way. Right before Lu enters the stage as a prisoner, his friend and colleague Pei Guangting, having obtained the emperor's command to lift Lu's death sentence, has begun to rush to the

execution ground. While drinking the imperial spirits, Lu is desperate and believes he will die in a few hours, but the salvation is darting his way. In the second round of drinking there exists simultaneously misery and hope. Similar to the first round, the second one also functions as a turning point, but this time it represents the change from death to living. The spirits in the first two rounds thus form a cycle of life, death, and then life again. Because neither of the two binary elements is permanent, they both have their illusory nature.

The third drinking round continues the ideas of oneness and the infinite cycle embodied in the first two rounds. The third round is the opposite of the first one. Specifically, the third drinking round ridicules the illusory relaxing milieu constructed by spirits in the first round. In the first round, the wife presents a cup of spirits to her husband as a reception. She welcomes Lu home from demanding official business. In the third round, Cui toasts Lu to alleviate his shock and also to bless him with good fortune upon his departure. It seems that the wife in both cases uses spirits as a comforting drink for Lu, but the beverages are not always as useful as Cui thinks. In the previous first round, Lu is able to drink even though he has had a meal in his office, but in the third round, Lu claims that he has been "drunken and full" ("zuibao" 醉飽, 147) after his imperially granted "last meal" and is hesitant to take his wife's cup. Despite Lu's unawareness, the delicious food and beverages become unattractive to him. Spirits in the third round no longer have the calming effect as they do in the first. Lu's involuntary rejection connotes the fact that the gustatory enjoyments induced by the beverages are useless in comforting or elating human beings. The previous pleasure and relaxation that seems to be brought by the substances is merely a fleeting illusion.

Moreover, the first and the third drinking rounds create an association between union and separation. When she compels Lu to take the spirits, Cui suddenly drops her cup. Cui is too

terrified to hold the cup, and the cup's dropping further alarms and frightens her. Even the attempt to present spirits to express the wifely love goes astray and becomes an evil omen for the husband's impendent, tragic departure. The comparison and contrast between the first and third rounds of drinking spirits connect the two opposite situations. While ostensibly disparate from one another the previous happiness and the present melancholy in fact exist in their similarities. The two extremes are thus closely associated and mutually included.

The third round also continues the cycle embodied at the first two drinking rounds. As Lu imprisons his heart with sensual pleasures, he cannot get rid of the illusory, infinite cycles of the positive and the negative. The completion of one cycle marks the beginning of another one. Although Lu's death sentence is lifted, immediately he must leave for the penal colony called *Guimen guan* 鬼門關, literarily meaning a "fortress at the gate of ghosts/hell." It is the gate of infernal. Cui's presentation of spirits to Lu contains both the happiness of life and deep grief over the separation. This drinking round suggests an opportunity of survival, and also foreshadows the possibility of poverty, disease, and starvation. In this round, one cycle of fortune-misfortune-fortune ends, and another one of misfortune-fortune-misfortune is about to start. At the end of the scene Lu tells Cui,

> you must carefully wait for my return from ten thousand miles away when I ride to the imperial court.
>
> 你則索小心兒守着我萬里生還也朝上馬。(148)

Lu is banished to the distant place, but he is confident in regaining his political status. In fact, Lu indeed get rid of the misfortune and enjoy great honor from the imperial court soon after. Yet because he is still trapped in the cycle, Lu is destined to end with a misfortune. As demonstrated in Scene 27 "Overindulgence in Physical Desires" ("Jiyu" 極慾) and 29 "The Scholar Wakes Up"

("Shengwu" 生寤), even though Lu achieves the highest position in the government, death becomes his unavoidable ultimate misfortune and takes everything he enjoys and cherishes away from him.

The drinking rounds in Scene 20 indicate both the nature of dreams, a theatrical, dramatic reflection of human life, and the divine power, an unknown force that causes Lu to experience abrupt ups-and-downs fraught with ironies. Spirits thus play double roles in Lu's dream. On the one hand, the three drinking rounds accelerate the alterations between fortune and misfortune. They recall and dramatize the humans' drinking in the Yueyang Tower. The entire scene foreshadows the two guests' future as they too indulge in the pursuit of the four elements. There is no doubt that Lu in the dream and the two guests in reality are all intoxicated in their heart. These people of *chi* involuntarily enter into the infinite cycle of altering between material bliss and physical suffering that ends with death. On the other hand, because spirits are pervasively presented in binary oppositions, the beverages connects the deities' satire of the two guests to Lu's *chi*. The drinking that is embodied with opposite meanings warn Lu of the fleeting nature of the worldly enjoyments and sufferings, even though he fails to recognize the implications. In addition, witnessing both Lu's happiness and tragedies, spirits are also like an observer of Lu's experience. The beverages can be seen as a representative of the deity in the dream, silently mocking Lu's unconsciousness of his life's illusion.

The dream is the key answer that explains why Lu becomes enlightened but the two guests do not. As the guests refuse to sleep on Lü's pillow, they miss their only chance to realize the illusion of human world. They would not even realize this even after their death. They may live as ghosts in the underworld, or get reborn into the world and continue the infinite cycles of chasing and losing material enjoyments. The only thing for sure is that the two guests as

themselves forever lose the opportunity to be delivered to the immortal island. In contrast, Lu dies in his dream. The dream mirrors the human life. Waking up from the dream and returning to the normal life, Lu has the chance to jump out of the cycles. In addition, retrieving the consciousness after death also suggests an experience of rebirth. Human beings get reborn without any memory of their previous life, but Lu wakes up and remembers every detail of his experience in the dream. The continuous life memory enables Lu to observe clearly the cycles of happiness and tragedy in life. Moreover, because the sixty years in his dream are shorter than the time needed to cook a meal of yellow millets in reality, this contrast of time further highlights the dream's illusory nature. In short, the life-like dream inspires Lu of the illusion of both the life in the dream and the life in human world.

The story of Lu's dream is also referred as "the dream of yellow millets (*huangliang yimeng* 黃粱夢)" in Chinese tradition. The meal of yellow millets is the indicator of the time contrast between the life in the dream and the life in reality. Yellow millets are thus associated with dream as well as awakening. It is interesting to notice that yellow millets are also the raw materials for making spirits. The Song poet Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060 C.E.) has mentioned such spirits in his poem "Farewell with Officer Zhang Zhonbin who is from Huaizhou" ("Song Huaizhou Zhang congshi Zhongbin" 送懷州張從事仲賓),

> The forest of honey locust starts to get dark,
> the spirits of yellow millets have not been harmonious
> 皂莢林初暗,
> 黃粱酒未和。(Mei, 594)

As stated before, both dream and intoxication refer to illusion, and to sober up and to wake up are described as *xing* in Chinese. Because yellow millets can be used to make spirits and also

imply the story of a dream, the two binaries of intoxication/sobriety and dream/awakening are simultaneously embodied in the tiny grains. The grains help Lu realize the illusion of human life, completing the first step to approach the ultimate true. They also stand for the co-existence of illusion and reality, which refers to the final step to achieve absolute freedom by seeing the sameness of all the binaries.

Conclusion: spirits and water

The first section of this chapter has discussed how people confuse water and spirits in the drinking taking place in Yueyang Tower. In addition to that, this conclusion takes a more general perspective to discuss how people restrict spirits and water due to their inability to fully understand the nature of liquid. Although spirits have the stimulating effect that makes it different from water, spirits and water are both liquids and have the nature of free flowing. In *Handan*, both the human world and the immortal island are surrounded by water, and deities and people use water to produce spirits. The two liquids in human world and in the immortal realm form a parallel and illustrate the contrasts between the deities' *zhen* and the humans' *chi*.

In *Handan*, the most ironic part in criticizing people's restriction on flowing liquids occurs in Scene 3 when the keeper shows off his spirits bottle to the two guests. The bottle is called Bottle Dongting (*Dongting hu* 洞庭壺). As bottle 壺 and lake 湖 are both pronounced as *hu* in Chinese, Bottle Dongting and Lake Dongting sound exactly the same. Using the name of a large lake for his spirits bottle, the keeper hopes to stress the amount of spirits contained in the bottle. However, the spirits container with a definite, small physical form indicates the restriction of the water in the lake. Despite their different sizes, the lake and spirit bottle share the same characteristic of constraining flowing liquids inside. The playful trick of the names fails to

enlarge the bottle's physical volume but instead suggests that the lake is as limited as the small container. People use both water and spirits to fulfill their desires for visual and gustatory pleasures. Thus they fail to discover the absolute freedom that the two liquids might intrinsically provoke.

Because the Yueyang Tower by the Lake Dongting is the only place that Lü visited before encountering Lu, it can be seen as the metaphor of the human world. The world restrains water into a physical form, but creates an illusion of the ability to float freely. The truth is that human beings can never enjoy the absolute freedom over lakes. Noticeably, even the restaurant in the Handan Road where Lü meets Lu is in Qinghe Town, literarily means Clear River Town. Lu's dwelling place is surrounded by the river, another limited form of water. The lake and river suggests people's incapability in achieving absolute freedom.

In comparison, the deities live in Penglai Island, a remote, isolated land in the sea. Unlike the lake, the sea represents the boundless, free flowing water. While water in the lake is constrained within the physical land, the water of the sea is surrounding outside of the island. The water is not restrained in any forms or by any boundaries. The sea is also much bigger than the definite island. The association between sea and island provides the deities with an ideal place to practice Dao. As Lu says,

> Penglai Island in the dark blue sea is the place for grand practice.
>
> 蓬萊滄海。大修行之處也。(HDJ, sc. 30, 226)

While the island suggests the remaining physical limitations of the deities, the sea symbolizes the freedom of unlimited flowing as well as roaming. To the deities, the sea has a similar function as the spirits. The two liquids both help the deities purify their *zhen* in heart and expand their perspective so that they can enjoy the absolute freedom of Dao.

The parallel of the water's physical constraint in the human world and the roaming freedom in the immortal island demonstrates the main idea in a conversation between Zhuangzi and Huizi in the chapter "Going Rambling Without Destination" in *Zhuangzi*. Huizi criticizes a large gourd is useless by saying,

> when you filled them with water or soup they weren't solid enough to stay upright, if you split them to make ladles they sagged and spilled over. It's not that they weren't impressively big, but because they were useless I smashed them to bits. (trans. Graham, 47)
>
> 以盛水漿，其堅不能自舉也；剖之以為瓢，則瓠落無所容。非不呺然大也，吾為其無用而掊之。(Wang, 16)

Zhuangzi, in response, suggests Huizi that

> why didn't it occur to you to make them into those big bottles swimmers tie to their waists, and go floating away over the Yangtse and the Lakes? If you worried because they sagged and wouldn't hold anything, isn't it that you still have a heart were the shoots grow up tangled? (trans. Graham, 47)
>
> 何不慮以為大樽而浮乎江湖，而憂其瓠落無所容？則夫子猶有蓬之心也夫！(Wang, 16)

Huizi is limited by his stereotypical conception of putting water inside his gourd. All his effort of using the gourd to contain water ends in vain. Huizi thus is like the people who always limit water or spirits in a physical form and waste their life grasping something that they will finally lose. These people are deluded by the *chi* in their hearts; their effort goes into a completely wrong direction as soon as they start. In contrast, Zhuangzi suggests putting the water outside the gourd. He breaks the clichéd association between water and gourd, and utilizes the water's free-

flowing nature to float the gigantic gourd. Zhuangzi's floating over the boundless water under the help of the gourd is similar to the deities' immortal island amidst the universe or the sea. These individuals are not distracted by any preset conceptions. They can make the proper use of the liquids to maximize the benefit.

Handan is a play of not only dream but also of spirits. Tang Xianzu explores the ultimate awakening through Lü's experience in the Yueyang Tower and Lu's dream in a restaurant by the Handan Road. The former describes a human world in which water is constrained and spirits are wasted. The latter one is an advanced and specific version of the former case, eventually breaking the illusion of life for Lu. At the end of the play, answering Lu's question about how to know the immortal island is not a dream, one of the Eight Deities says, "the dreams of the roaming immortals are stable 遊仙夢穩" (HDJ, sc. 30, 230) The stable dream, echoing the deities' conception of intoxication, refers to the sobriety of heart. Once the heart retrieves its origin of *zhen*, the distinction between illusion and reality is no longer important. One thus will achieve absolute freedom of roaming and enjoy stability.

Conclusion

Spirits and The Ethic of *Zhen*:

The Purification of *Zhen* in *The Story of Purple Hairpin* and *The Story of Handan*

Purple Hairpin and *Handan* demonstrate the Neo-Confucian ethic of *zhen* from respectively a Confucian and a Daoist perspective. *Purple Hairpin* suggests the playwright's active and optimistic attitude towards social problems like moral corruption. *Handan*, in comparison, is more passive and permissive, revealing the illusion of the entire human world. Both plays, however, accentuate the core concept of *zhen*. Analysis of negative and positive spirit functions in both Confucian and Daoist contexts traces the development of *zhen*. In *Purple Hairpin*, as a manifestation of Confucian harmony, spirits fabricate a deceptively agreeable atmosphere that destroys human relationships, but they also bring a dynamic balance benefiting all individuals. In *Handan*, spirits provoke human desire for illusory gustatory enjoyment, but also liberate individuals to enjoy absolute freedom. In both plays, spirits serve positively when consumed in combination with *zhen*. The beneficial influence of the beverages also increases when the ethics of *zhen* become more purified and pervasive. In the two plays, the male protagonists, Li Yi and Lu Sheng, initially suffer from the negative effect of spirits. Yet, in the end, they both benefit from the spirits' positive functions. Their experiences illustrate the emergence and purification of *zhen*.

As *zhenqing* emerges and develops into an ethic, spirits function more and more positively and influentially in *Purple Hairpin*. In the corrupting Confucian society in *Purple Hairpin*, Li is involved in an insincere wedding ceremony and jeopardized by the hypocritical

minister's banquet. In short, Li is constrained by and suffers from the society of utilitarianism and hypocrisy. Nonetheless, when Li is drinking with Huo Xiaoyu, the lovers' *zhenqing* enables enjoyment of the harmonious utopia conjured by the spirits. Later, as *zhenqing* develops to overcome the limitation of a romantic relationship, the spirits help bring the outsider and savior Huangshan Ke into the realm of *zhenqing*. Both Li and Huo, the two core characters in such realm, benefit from the positive effect of the spirits on the knight. An absence of spirits in the last two scenes symbolizes the final purification of *zhenqing* in *Purple Hairpin*. Harmonious human relationships are no longer restricted between lovers or dependent on ritual objects like spirits. Instead, the scene illustrates *zhenqing* as a core and single principle for the great union.

While *Purple Hairpin* depicts the process of purifying *zhen* through the expansion of *zhenqing*, *Handan* directly demonstrates the purification of *zhen*. In *Handan*, spirits influence Lu Sheng in a similar way as the beverages provide to Li. In both the fantasy world and the life-like dream, Lu drinks the spirits, becomes indulgent with the beverages, and suffers from an infinite cycle of chasing and losing all sensual pleasures. While spirits, as a ritual object, confine Li in the corrupting Confucian society, the beverages representing one of the material desires trap Lu in the illusory world. In *Purple Hairpin*, hypocrisy prevents the spirits from arousing Confucian harmony; in *Handan*, the humans' *chi* prevents the beverages from liberating the hearts. In *Handan*'s final scene, Lu is enlightened and delivered to the immortal island. With retrieval of *zhen* in his heart, Lu then, like all the Eight Deities, has the opportunity to experience absolute freedom prompted by drinking spirits. As reasoned in Chapter 3, the more Lu keeps purifying *zhen* in his heart, he become less dependent on spirits to enjoy the freedom of uninhibited roaming. As *zhenqing* replaces spirits to arouse Confucian harmony in *Purple Hairpin*, *zhen* would also replace the beverages to allow the Zhuangzian style of free roaming in *Handan*.

In general, Tang Xianzu's four plays, which are referred as *the Four Dreams of Linchuan* (*Linchuan Simeng* 臨川四夢), together from the emergence and the gradual purification of *zhen* by inscribing the beginning, development, and then the fading of *qing.* As mentioned in the introduction, the four plays are written chronically: *Purple Hairpin* (finished in 1587 CE) and *Peony Pavilion* (1598), *The Story of Southern Bough* (*Nanke ji* 南柯記, 1600) and *Handan* (1601). *Zhenqing* in *Purple Hairpin* and *Peony Pavilion* embodies the magical power to save the female and male protagonists from their fatal sufferings and to rectify all social corruption. Alternatively, demonstrated through romance, such romantic *qing* between lovers also implies sexuality, which is identified in *The Story of Southern Bough* and *Handan* as an illusive, one of the corrupting elements of the human world. As indicated in Tang's letter to his friend Luo Dahong 羅大紘 (?-?) "Replying to Luo Kuanghu" (Da Luo Kuanghu 答羅匡湖), Luo, after reading Tang's first two plays, criticizes the plays for being "overindulgent in ostentatious words 過耽綺語" (Tang, 1401). "Ostentatious words" ("*qiyu*" 綺語) refer to the erotic allusions suggested in romantic *qing*. Tang then clarifies at the end of his letter that "as the two dreams have finished, the ostentatious words are exhausted 二夢已完，綺語都盡" (1401). The ostentatious words in the first two plays portray a romantic decoration of *zhen* and the physical split of *zhenqing*. In comparison, the later two plays, without the decorating ostentatious words, directly illustrate the unparalleled importance and necessity of the metaphysical *zhen*. The positive and negative functions of spirits demonstrate features of the physical and metaphysical splits of *zhenqing*. Interpretation of the beverages, thus, sheds an essential light in understanding Tang's representation and metaphor of *zhenqing* that created the cult of *qing* in the late Ming era.

Bibliography

Chinese Resources

Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi 春秋左傳正義 [*The Commentary of Zuo*]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu* 十三經注疏 [*Thirteen Classics with Commentaries*]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Du, Fu. 杜甫. *Dufu quanji* 杜甫全集 [*The Complete Anthology of Du Fu*]. Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 1996. Print.

Fang, Yurun 方玉潤. *Shijing yuanshi* [*Tracing the origin of* The Book of Poetry]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986. Print.

Huang, Junjie. "Zhongguo sanjia 'heya' yu jiu wenhua jingshen" [The Three Teachings' 'The Harmony of Human and Nature' and Spirits Culture in China]. *Guizhou daxue xuebao*. 27. 4 (2007). 140-144. Print.

Li, Zhi 李贄. "Tongxin Shuo" 童心說 ["The Discussion On the Child-like Heart"]. *Li Zhi Wenji* 李贄文集. Ed. Jianye Zhang and Yousheng Liu. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chuban she, 2000. Print.

Liji zhengyi 禮記正義 [The Book of Rites]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu.* Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Liu, Xiang 劉向. *Zhanguo Ce* 戰國策. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1985. Print.

——, *Shuo Yuan* 说苑疏證. Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chuban she, 1985. Print.

Lunyu zhushu 論語注疏 [*The Analects*]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Maoshi zhengyi 毛詩正義 [*The Book of Poetry*]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Menzi zhushu 孟子注疏 [*Mencius*]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 et al. Vol. 16 of *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 [*The Complete Anthology of Tang poetry*]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979. Print.

Qiu, Jun 邱濬. *Wulun quanbei zhongxiao ji* 五倫全備忠孝記 [*The Fulfillment of the Five Ethical Relationships*]. In Vol. 1 of *Guben xiqu congkan* 古本戲曲叢刊. Beijing: Guben xiqu congkan bianwei hui, 1954. Print.

Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖. *Handan ji* 邯鄲記 [*The Story of Handan*]. Ed. Xiao Li and Wenjing Jin. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe. 2004. Print.

——. *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 [*Peony Pavilion*]. Ed. Shuofang Xu and Xiaomei Yang. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 2002. Print.

——. Tang Xianzu quanji 湯顯祖全集 [*The Complete Anthology of Tang Xianzu*]. Beijing: Beijing guji chuban she. 1999. Print.

——. *Zichai ji* 紫釵記 [*The Story of Purple Hairpin*]. Ed. Shiying Hu. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982. Print.

Shangshu zhengyi 尚書正義 [*The Book of Documents*]. In *Shisan Jing Zhushu*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999. Print.

Wang, Yangming 王陽明. *Chuanxi Lu* 傳習錄. Annotated by Huaicheng Zhang. Hunan: Yuelu shushe, 2004. Print.

Wang, Xianqian 王先謙. *Shi sanjia yiji shu* 詩三家義集疏 [*The Collections of Three Schools' Annotations on* Poetry]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987. Print.

——. Zhuangzi jijie 莊子集解 [*The Collections of Annotations on* Zhuangzi]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju. 2012. Print.

English Resources

Chang, Kwang-chih. *Food in Chinese Culture : Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. Print.

Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius*. Trans. Simon Leys. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

Confucius et al. *The Four Books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of The Mean, The Works of Mencius*. Trans. James Legge. Taipei: Cheng-wen Publishing Co. 1971. Print.

Knechtges, David R. *Literary Feast: Food in Early Chinese Literature*. 2004. Print.

Li, Chengyang. *The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge. 2014. Print.

Li Chi: Book of Rites. Translated by James Legge. New York: New Hyde Park, 1967. Print.

Li, Wai-yee. *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993. Print.

——. "Languages of Love and Parameters of Culture in *Peony Pavilion* and *The Story of the Stone*." *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*. Ed. Halvor Eifring. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004. 237-270. Print.

The Chinese Classics. Trans. James Legge. (Taipei: Jinxue shuju). 1968.

The Ch'un Tsew with the Tso Chua. Trans. James Legge. London: Trubner, 1861.

Zhuangzi 莊子. *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Translated by Graham, A.C. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001. Print.

Sima Qian 司馬遷. Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I. Trans. Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press Book, 1958. Print

Endnotes

[1] In Chinese, *jiu* 酒 refers to all the alcoholic beverages in history, including fermented wine and distilled spirits. In addition, *jiu*, along with its stimulating and intoxicating nature, is also assigned with metaphysical connotations. *Jiu* is usually related to spiritual liberation and celestial beings. It is thus impossible to find an English word that perfectly describes *jiu* from Chinese.

"Spirits" is the only word that suggests the alcoholic nature of *jiu,* and to some extent, also alludes to *jiu*'s stimulating effect on human imagination. However, distilled spirits (*shaojiu* 燒酒) did not appear in China until the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE), so technically spirits should only refer to Chinese *jiu* after the 13th century. Yet maintaining the historical consistency of the concept of *jiu*, this thesis expands the definition of spirits and uses this word for *jiu* all along Chinese history, including the Shang (about 1600-1050 BCE) and Zhou (1046-256 BCE) dynasties.

[2] See *Chuanxi Lu* 傳習錄 especially for Chapter 1, for detailed explanation of "knowing and acting conflate in one."

[3] The years are from *The Chronicle Of Tang Xianzu* 湯顯祖年譜, edited by Shuofang Xu.

[4] This idea is supported by scholar Chenyang Li, in the chapter "Harmony with creative tension" of his book *The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony*, 7-22.

[5] The sentence "the spirits is harmonious and delicious" (jiu ji hezhi 酒既和旨) is in the poem *Bin zhi chuyan* 賓之初筵. *SSJZS* 876-893.

[6] Such concern is indicated in Scene 14.

[7] For more explanation on *hetou*, which is also referred as heqian 和前, see *Poeny Pavilion*, edited by Shuofang Xu, 13.

[8] The texts describing the seats are as follow:

On the same day Xiang Yu invited the governor of Pei to remain an drink with him. Xiang Yu and Xiang Bo as hosts sat facing east. Fan Zeng, whom Xiang Yu honoured as a father, took the place of honour facing south, while the governor of Pei sat facing north with Zhang Liang, as his attendant, facing west. Fan Zeng from time to time eyed Xiang Yu and three times lifted up the

jade pendant in the form of a broken ring which he wore and showed it to Yu, hinting that he should "break"once and for all with the governor, but Xiang Yu sat silent. (trans. Watson, 30) The governor of Pei is Liu Bang. In the banquet, Liu Bang sits in one of the humblest place.

[9] See in Scene 29 and Scene 31.

[10] The character "*kuan*" literally means casual. The sentence is probably adapted from Du Fu's 杜甫 (712-770 CE) "I know that the general practice generous rituals 自識將軍禮數寬" in the poem *Mr. Yan Comes to My Cottage With Spirits and Food in the Midsummer* 嚴公仲夏枉駕草堂兼攜酒饌 (Du, 741-742). It describes a general who does not emphasize his higher official position when facing his inferiors. Therefore "*kuan*" does not contradict with the character "*duo*," which refers to large amount, in the previous poetic sentence cited. Both "*kuan*" and "*duo*" demonstrate the superiors' deferential treatment to the interior.

[11] Although Huansha 浣紗, Huo Xiaoyu's maid, accompanies with the lovers in their garden tour, the maid never joins Huo and Li to sing a tune to appreciate the landscape in the garden. She is therefore excluded from the lovers' utopia.

[12] A Chinese medicine named "*danggui*," which literally means "should return." In the sentence, it refers to Li Yi's return.

[13] Huangshan Ke has left after he encourages Li to present Huo a cup of spirits. The knight foresees the final union between Li and Huo, so he decides to return to his previous life of freedom.

[14] "The flower attach with the mist of sweet-scented osmanthus" is from the poem *Summer* of Li Shangyin's *Four Poems of Yantai* 燕臺四首. The poem uses unclear, difficult words to describe the poet's deep, delicate *qing*. Two of the lines in the poems are "for how many nights the misted

kapoks flower bloom 幾夜瘴花開木棉" and "the palace of sweet-scented osmanthus leaves the shadow and the light is hard to grasp. 桂宮留影光難取." The lines are in two connected sentences. The shared images of flowers, mist of flowers, and sweet-scented osmanthus in Tang and Li's poems should prove the association between the two. (Peng, 6232)

[15] Yueyang Tower is in nowadays Hunan Province.

[16] According to the play, the Handan Road is in nowadays Hebei Province.

[17] In Scene 30 one of the Eight Deities refer themselves as *xianzhen*.

[18] More details on the inner elixir practices described in the sentences can be seen in *Zichai ji*, edited by Xiao Li and Wenjing Jin, 227.